



## **Blood and Oil**

**Testimonies of Violence from Women of the Niger Delta**

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**Sokari Ekine - 2001**

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*You smiled your pasty smile  
While you plotted our plunder  
But today before the whole world  
We shall come forward as heirs  
And claim what is rightfully ours –  
The land of our fathers.*

Jacqueline Onyejiaka: *Crossroads*

*Dem leave sorrow, tears and blood  
Dem regular trademark*

Fela Anikulapo Kuti: *Sorrow, Tears and Blood*

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The research for this work was done without any funding. It continues to be the case that African and Black women have little or no access to financial support for their work.

## Preface

The on-going social and economic crisis in Nigeria's Niger Delta has generated a thriving industry in books, journals and news commentary. And for good reason. The Niger Delta is one of the world's most threatened ecosystems. The inhabitants have, since oil production commenced in the area in 1958, been subjected to economic exploitation and political marginalisation, a situation so dire that they are now struggling to protect what little still remain of their habitat and their way of life. The refrain now in the Niger Delta is 'resource control,' environmental justice and 'true' federalism.

I have been paying close attention to developments in the Niger Delta since the hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists in November 1995 brought international opprobrium on the military regime of the late General Sani Abacha, triggering a chain of events that culminated in the suspension of Nigeria from the Commonwealth. Faced with the legitimate demands of its citizens in the area for a political and economic arrangement that is responsive to their desire for sustainable development and meaningful participatory processes that can bring this about, successive regimes in the country have responded with intimidation and brutal repression.

It is the blood that has been spilled in the Niger Delta that Sokari Ekine grapples with in *Oil and Blood: Testimonies of Violence from Women of the Niger Delta*. It is a ground-breaking work. *Oil and Blood* restores voice and agency to a segment of the Niger Delta crisis that has often been neglected or given short shrift by journalists, writers and researchers: Women. This book is also very important for yet another reason. In its pages the authentic voices of these women spring to life. We hear them speak of their fears and sufferings and pains. We hear them speak of rape and defilement and death. They speak of loss of property and limbs and loved ones. These, to be sure, are ordinary women – farmers, fisher folk, market women, house wives. But they are made extraordinary and heroic by their deeds. For while the voices that speak to us in Ms Ekine's book are victims of a state allied to Big Oil that deploy force to smash all opposition, even peaceful and legitimate opposition, these women have also resisted this unaccountable and illegitimate power in various ways.

Particularly striking is the story of the women of Odi and the way in which they transformed adversity into creative challenge following the levelling of their town and murder of hundreds by Nigerian troops in November 1999. Here are people forced to begin life all over again after all that they had accumulated over years of thrift and hard work had gone up in smoke. There was little or no assistance from the Nigerian government or indeed international agencies to cushion the pain and give them a fresh head-start. But these women did not wallow in self-pity or allow themselves to be consumed by their grief, deep and painful though it was. They simply picked themselves up and began to rebuild their homes, their farms, their fishing boats and their shattered lives. Theirs is a testimony to courage; a testimony to the resilience of the human spirit.

There is also the heroism of the members of the Federated Ogoni Women's Association (FOWA). Faced with a military occupation force that overran the land, they took to organising clandestinely, in deserted farms, in darkened village churches, even in underground bunkers in the bowels of the earth. The impression has been created that the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) is an all-male affair, led by intellectuals and political activists schooled in the language and idioms of human rights as conceptualised in the West. But this is only a part of the story as this work makes clear. Ogoni women, some of them simple peasant folk, were also very much part of the struggle for self-determination and economic justice. They too were shot; they too were imprisoned. But unlike their male counterparts, they also suffered the horrifying ordeal of rape. The soldiers that violated these women sought to break their spirits. But in this they failed abysmally. There is defiance in this book. There is courage; there is a stubborn refusal to give the last word to bullies and their sponsors.

This book could not have been put together without the active support Sokari Ekine received from the women of the Niger Delta themselves, and also members of the Niger Delta Women for Justice (NDWJ), a community NGO in the Niger Delta with whom she collaborated in the field research. It is an unusual book in the sense that the author took great pains to retain the tones

and flavours and mannerisms of speech of her interviewees. It is richer, more realistic and more rewarding for this, chilling though the narrative is.

I commend this book to all those who care about power and its misuse; and those grappling with the very important issue of how women in the underdeveloped world, invariably at the sharp end of the stick, might be enabled to take back that which is theirs by right: dignity.

Ike Okonta  
August 2001

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## Introduction

The discovery of oil in Nigeria's Niger Delta in 1956 triggered a chain of events that has led to the political and economic marginalisation of the inhabitants. Rivers, farmland and fishing creeks have also been subjected to devastation, due to the activities of the Western oil companies operating in the Niger Delta. Indeed, it has been argued that oil has been more of curse than a blessing to the people who have been at the receiving end of horrendous government repression and brutality, often resulting in fatalities. Despite 40 years of oil production and hundreds of billions of dollars of oil revenue, the local people remain in abject poverty without even the most basic amenities such as water and electricity.

In August 1990, the Ogoni nation, under the leadership of the late Ken Saro Wiwa, presented the Ogoni Bill of Rights to the government and people of Nigeria. The Ogoni Bill of Rights was a revolutionary document in the history of Nigeria. Although the late politician, Obafemi Awolowo, in his book, *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, proposed that all ethnic groups be given equal treatment in the federation, this was the first time an ethnic nationality had articulated the basis of a struggle for ethnic autonomy and self determination and had presented this to the government and peoples of Nigeria.

All the ethnic nationalities of the Niger Delta have declared the intention and determination to reclaim their human dignity and fundamental rights. These declarations - the Kaiama Declaration, Aklaka Declaration of the Egi People, the Oron Bill of Rights, the Warri Accord, Resolutions of the First Urhobo Economic Summit and the Ogoni Bill of Rights - form the basis for the struggle for self-determination and ownership of resources by each nationality.

The response of the Nigerian military and civilian governments to these non-violent declarations, which are within the realms of legitimate protest, has been to wage a low-intensity war against the people since 1990. During this 10-year period, the Niger Delta has been under military occupation and the people have been subjected to a continuum of violence and human rights violations by the Nigerian Government and its partners, the multinational oil companies. The number of people killed, and the extent to which people have been displaced is difficult to estimate. However it is certain that women make up a large proportion of that number. The international community continues to ignore the conflict in the Niger Delta. While African and Western heads of state are courting the government of President Olusegun Obasanjo, it has been linked to large scale massacres of local people.

This report details the oral testimonies of women from the Niger Delta, as told to me over a period of three weeks in March 2000. These are ordinary women who have become extraordinary by virtue of the violence they have experienced and the courage they have to speak out despite the risk they incur of retribution by the state authorities. In presenting the stories I intend to highlight the impact of militarisation and oil exploration on the lives of women and girls and to give voice to the experiences of the women and girls who live in and around the many tributaries, rivers and creeks of the delta of the River Niger.

The focus of this report is the testimonies of the women I spoke with. The presentation is shaped by my experience of listening to the women, the circumstances of each interview, my memories of their faces and their lives. These memories are of tears, laughter, sadness, anger, frustration, inspiration and sisterhood. Many of the women gave their names; some did not. Deciding on whether to use real names or any names was a difficult one for me. I felt that by using real names, I placed more emphasis on the individual. If I did not name the women, then their experiences would be undermined as they would simply appear as "one woman" or "a woman from ...". Cathy Winkler's work, "Ethnography of the [Ethnographer](#)",<sup>1</sup> chronicling the three and half hour period she was held hostage and repeatedly raped, describes her ordeal as "his rape," not "her rape". It was his act of violence that she wrote about. In this spirit, I am writing about "their acts of violence," Therefore, by naming the individual women that I spoke with (unless they chose not to be named) I intend to emphasise and identify the terror unleashed by the Nigerian

government on their lives. Nevertheless the choice was for the women themselves and it is testimony to their courage that many of them were prepared to risk allowing their real names to be included.

Something needs to be said about the context and the political climate in which this research was undertaken. The Niger Delta region is under military occupation - this is a fact. The words of the women in this study will attest to that. My own experience of travelling in three states in the area - Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta - will attest to that. The use by the Nigerian government, of "mobile police"<sup>1</sup> who are fully armed with automatic weapons, specially fitted out military style vehicles and the authority to cause mayhem will attest to that. We were stopped at the entrance and exit of every community we visited, sometimes up to four times in a space of a 30 minute drive time by either soldiers or mobile police. We were questioned, often insulted and our car searched. The mere fact of knowing that one would be stopped and that anything could result from that, created fear. I travelled with a constant gnawing fear hidden behind a façade of nonchalance. This was as much a protection strategy as it was a firm resolve that they (the soldiers) should not know their impact on my feelings. We travelled in a private car. Those using public transport including the drivers, were subjected to much more severe and intense harassment, verbal abuse, abuse of property and extortion.

The aim of violence is to undermine "the world as we know it". Violence distorts our lives, causes chaos, panic, fear. It disables us physically and psychologically. The violence referred to in my study is all-inclusive, that is, it is psychological, physical, emotional, sexual, verbal. In many instances an act of violence includes all of these, in some cases only a few. Violence and or the threat of violence are ever present and walk hand in hand with fear. Fear of walking, fear of travelling, fear of crossing the path of MOPOL<sup>2</sup>, fear of rape, all constitute violence. For the sake of survival, we begin to 'manage' our fear, that is, we temporarily consign it to the recesses of our consciousness. Here it lies ready to re-surface at the sight of a MOPOL, policeman, even a sudden loud noise.

I do not attempt to rationalise or understand specific acts of violence. As Nordstrom [states](#),<sup>2</sup> after a while one simply "accepts the existence of senselessness". What I did want to understand was how it occurred and impacted on the lives of the women I met, how they were resisting this violence and how they can continue to resist it in the future.

In her book, *Girls and Warzones: Troubling Questions*, Nordstrom<sup>i</sup> asks us to consider the notion that acts of abuse are not intrinsic to human nature. Rather acts are taught and learned and more importantly people have learned that these "acts of violence" are possible. They are possible because of the social and personal inequalities that exist between the abuser and abused. We also need to consider the location of what "we deem to be violence."<sup>ii</sup> The violence about which I am writing is situated in many different places and is made up of many different layers. It is located in the lives of the women as recounted in their narratives, the violent actions and the physical realities of their lives; it is in the President, his military commanders and the soldiers that carry out the acts themselves; it is in the society itself that condones the violence and fails to challenge these acts of violence when committed. It is in the culture of violence that is woven into the fabric of a society ruled by military dictators for 30 of its 40 years.

We can look at these narratives, at the physical evidence of death, environmental neglect, poverty, destruction of property and react with horror. Yet in my experience as an observer, horror is a passive expression, it leaves one standing, it is internal feeling that does not immediately move one to action. A much more appropriate reaction is anger. Anger is a more effective response. In this instance, it can be an act of resistance as it forces action and it is action that is needed. Talking to me was in itself a courageous act of resistance. Many of the

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- i. Mobile Police are a para-military police unit. They are used both for 'police' type activities and 'military style' operations and may include heavy artillery and tanks. Mobile Police are deployed throughout the Niger Delta both in the rural areas and in the cities.
  - ii. MOPOL - Slang for Mobile Police



women were clearly angry about what had happened. Others were stoic in their demeanour, their grief worn like a mask on their faces.

### **Methodology and Structure:**

The interviews were carried out by Jennifer Pere and myself on behalf of Niger Delta Women for Justice. We asked each interviewee whether or not they wished to talk to us through an interpreter. Some chose to do so and this person was generally someone from their own community. Otherwise women spoke to us in English or what we call in Nigeria "broken" English. With a few exceptions I have translated all the testimonies into standard English so as to be accessible to a wider audience. Chapter 1 is an introduction to the research project. Chapter 2 provides a background to the testimonies and briefly examines the role of the Nigerian Government and multinational oil companies in the Niger Delta. Chapters 3 – 7 present the background to selected community crisis followed by the testimonies themselves.

Over a period of three weeks we visited 13 communities covering five [ethnic nationalities](#)<sup>3</sup>. Due to time and financial constraints the research was limited to three of the states in the Niger Delta - Rivers State, Bayelsa State and Delta State. The communities we chose were all in zones of violence that had experienced periods of 'crisis' over the past 10 years. In addition to the communities visited interviews were also conducted with women leaders from Itsekiri and Ilaje, a community in Ondo State. These were held in Warri town, Delta State. There was and remains, an ongoing conflict between the Ijaw and Itsekiri and the Ijaw and Ilaje although the latter has been somewhat resolved. As both myself and my research colleague are Ijaw we felt it was too dangerous to travel to Itsekiriland. We chose not to go to Ilaje as it was too far and we had neither the time nor the finances to travel that distance.

Where possible, visits to communities were arranged in advance with an activist or community organiser. This took place at [ERA](#)<sup>4</sup> offices in Port Harcourt where NDWJ and a number of other NGOs and Activist groups are based. It is also a meeting place for community leaders from all over the Niger Delta. We would either expect a particular person on a set day or send a message for them to come to the office. We would explain the research and arrange to visit the community on a particular day.

Communication was very difficult and often we could not make contact with a community. In these cases we simply 'just appeared' early in the morning. We would generally seek out the "woman leader" in the town or sometimes we would start by stopping and talking to a group of women. Often we would sit and talk with individuals or groups of women and girls in the open, under a tree or in some other public space. Occasionally we were invited into homes. In all cases we were well received and quite often "entertained" and on two occasions received with excellence. We were given the traditional welcome of 'kola nuts' and or money and in Ogoniland, singing and dances by the women.

In Kaiama and Odi we simply started at the beginning of the town and walked our way through to the end. Our day would start around 7am and we would return approximately 12 hours later. We had hoped to travel to Oloibiri, the site of the first oil well and one of the most devastated communities. Unfortunately the road was impassable even with a 4 wheel drive (which we did not have). We also would have needed to take a boat and were not sure we would get one. We were also hampered by a lack of fuel due to a conflict between the people of Eleme, the location of Port Harcourt's oil refinery, and Okrika their neighbours. Like many inter ethnic conflicts this one was over compensation, in this case orchestrated by officials of the oil refinery in the locality. The refinery officials had offered to pay compensation to the Eleme people for the land. However, the Okrika people felt they too were entitled to compensation as the refinery pipes expelled their waste into Okrika fishing waters. This is an excellent example of the way communities are divided and set against one another by the oil companies.

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iii. Ikwerre, Ijaw, Egi, Isoko, Ogoni.

iv. Environmental Rights Action, FOE Nigeria

It is extremely important that the research agenda should arise from and be in harmony with the needs of the people. Undertaking this work required a permanent commitment on my part. My presence, my explanations for doing the work presented to the women I spoke with, brought with it expectations - that I would produce a piece of work of real benefit to the women and their communities. Many women complained bitterly about the "European visitors" that came and went never to be seen or heard of again. Worse were the ones that arranged to visit their communities but never bothered to turn up. Most of the women we spoke with were enthusiastic about the work we were undertaking and invariably asked us to please do something, and to please tell the world. Others were more cautious, not because they did not value the work, but because they had been let down so many times by people that came and went and did nothing. They felt used and abused by these people who were invariably foreigners.

This is a case study of socio political violence. It concerns the experience and realities of those undergoing the violence as well as my own experience as the researcher who also happens to come from the area under study. I too am tied to the land, not on an everyday level, but socially, politically, morally, culturally. My personal life and professional interest are one and the same. In other words, I am ethnically, culturally, politically and morally "attached" to the Niger Delta and the struggle for self-determination. This work is a "work of resistance, an act of solidarity" on the part of all the women - those who spoke, those who watched, those who listened and those who wrote - for all of us.

I am minded of one particular meeting. This occurred on my first day in the field in the village of Oloibiri, adjacent to Kaiama in Ijawland. The day started at 8am when we left Port Harcourt for the one and half hour journey to Kaiama. We arrived at about 9.30 and after a short break proceeded to interview women in the town. We were both totally unprepared for the day. We carried no water or food and had forgotten the tape recorder in Port Harcourt. By 4pm we were thoroughly exhausted both physically and mentally and made the decision to "look" for food which we found under the Kaiama bridge in the form of mineral drinks and bread - the only food we could face by now. After our break we went on to do some more interviews in Kaiama and then on to Oloibiri.

Interviewee No. 16, the last of the day - female, mid-thirties, mother, trader. Neither of us was prepared for what followed. We were tired, hungry our mouths parched, my hot face sore from constantly having to wipe the sweat that persisted without break throughout my stay. We approached a woman who was sitting outside her stall on the main path and introduced ourselves. She was clearly disinterested and possibly irritated. We were not the first and probably won't be the last and she showed little interest in talking to us. We both sensed that this woman had a 'story' to tell so we stood and talked generally explaining who we were and why we wanted to talk to her and so on. On realising we were local women and understanding what it was we were doing, she began to tell us her story. Her silence, her face told the story of pain and sadness.

Just to stand with this woman was to hear her pain, her grief and suffering. She spoke little and what she said was matter of fact and to the point. It was during the Kaiama invasion, they had all fled on hearing the military approaching. Her son ran back to the house to get something and was shot in the stomach. That was it. Her life and suffering in a sentence. For me the hardest part of this particular interview was that her son was just two months older than mine. He would have been 21 March this year. I cannot forget this woman, I see her all the time in my mind and imagine if it was my son. I know I too would have told him not to go back but he probably like hers would have said "It's OK, I will be careful". He would think that with his youth and speed he would not be caught. I as the mother would wait and wait for him to return. This is what happened. I could see it as she spoke. I told her "I too have a son, and he too would not have listened" and with that we said goodbye and God bless and left.

The women of the Niger Delta are part of the communities of suffering and resistance that exist throughout the world. Unfortunately the testimonies can only give you the words, it cannot reproduce the tears, the sadness and pain that accompanied the words. The reader should be

reminded therefore that behind the words are women whose hearts are swollen with pain but whose strength is uncompromising.

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## 2. Sleeping Partners: Oil Companies and the Nigerian State

### Introduction

The Niger Delta is unusual in terms of its size and location. It is "a huge fan of land", over 20,000sq kilometres, fed by deposits from the Niger and Benue rivers which spread out to the Atlantic ocean. It lies just north of the equator and is one of the wettest places [on earth](#).<sup>iii</sup> The delta contains 6,000 square kilometres of mangrove forest and 11,700 sq. kilometres of freshwater swamp. The ecosystem of the Niger Delta is complex and fragile. Its survival is dependent on the interaction between the many species of life that exist there and on the method of exploitation of the resources it produces.

Two factors have led to the pauperisation and marginalisation of the people of the area: the unmediated domination and neglect by a succession of brutal and corrupt military and civilian administrations and the mindless ecological destruction and total disregard for human rights by their partners in crime, the oil companies.

The Niger Delta people now wish to reclaim their land and their dignity. They wish to assert their humanity and take control of their lives in a society that treats them inhumanely. To this end they are now engaged in a democratic process to gain control of their own resources and to end the reckless destruction of their ecosystem. The different ethnic nationalities of the Niger Delta have made their positions and demands clear. These are resources management and control, democratisation of development and an end to cultural injustices inflicted on the people. It does not mean a break up of Nigeria. Nothing good has come from oil. No roads, no electricity, no hospitals or clinics, no water, no education, no respect for people's dignity or human rights, no respect for the land that is the people's birthright and certainly no prosperity from the multi-billion oil industry located on their land.

The response of the Nigerian government to the demands for ecological justice, restoration of the environment and corporate responsibility by the people of the Niger Delta, has been brutal repression, judicial and mass murder, torture, rape, and burning of land and property. The reaction of successive governments, including the present so called "democratic" government led by Olusegun Obasanjo, a former military dictator, can only be described as authoritarian and completely paranoid. Thus the ethnic minorities of the Niger Delta find themselves trapped between two evils - the oil companies on the one hand and the tyrannical Nigerian government on the other. The people of the area were criminalised in 1993 when the General Babangida-led military government passed the Treason and Treasonable Offences Decree, making it a criminal offence to call for minority autonomy.

In preparation for reading the testimonies that are central to this report, it is important to fully understand the features of the many crises in the Niger Delta and to identify those involved and the nature of their involvement.

### Privatisation of the State

From the slave traders to the merchant capitalists of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the multinationals of today, the Niger Delta has been continuously underdeveloped and exploited by European capital which, together with indigenous miscreants and compradors, has sought to pilfer, appropriate and pirate the wealth of the region. Nigeria's political economy is wholly dominated and dependent on revenue from oil rents collected from foreign multinationals.

Oil from the Niger Delta accounts for 95-97% of Nigeria's total export earnings and 25-28% of its [GDP](#).<sup>iv</sup> Yet, after 40 years of production, the people of the ND have received nothing. Nothing from the revenues of oil, nothing in terms of compensation for the destruction of their environment. Successive legislation has cheated the region out of any share of revenue from oil rents by constantly revising the revenue allocation formula to benefit the ethnic [majorities](#).<sup>v</sup>

Alongside the theft of oil rents, a series of military decrees have robbed the people of their right to ownership and control over their land and its uses.

The rentier mentality of successive Nigerian governments and the rentier elite, has led to the collapse of the agricultural sector, the underdevelopment of the industrial base, and total inertia towards the welfare of the people. Issues such as environmental degradation are of no particular concern. Rather, the elite circulate the wealth between themselves, jealousy guarding the status quo and living up to the phrase “conspicuous consumption”. Untold billions of US dollars have been stolen and misappropriated by the “cannibalistic vampire state”. Each successive government has sucked its share of blood from the land and people. Generals Babangida and Abacha are said to have stolen billions of dollars each. This plunder of the national treasury continues under the present administration of Obasanjo at federal and state level.

Myth: Obasanjo is Nigeria’s saviour and the light at the end of the tunnel of darkness that was Abacha. Fact: President Olusegun Obasanjo is Nigeria’s latest exercise in self-deception. A member of the Supreme Military Council that came to power in July 1975, Obasanjo became Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces following the attempted coup that killed General Murtala Mohammed in February 1976. This marked the beginning of three years of totalitarian rule. He began by ignoring due process in law and summarily tried and executed a military governor and 22 others for their supposed part in the coup. He violated the human rights of the Nigerian people when he ordered the killing of peacefully demonstrating students in Zaria in 1978. He followed this up by proscribing the National Union of Nigerian Students (NUNS), establishing a detention center on the crocodile-infested island of Ita-Oko near Lagos, and closing down several newspapers. Obasanjo was particularly active in disadvantaging the people of the Niger Delta. In 1978, he passed the Land Use Decree and Revenue Allocation Act, in which he effectively transferred the land and resources of the inhabitants of the Niger Delta to a corrupt and improvident Nigerian state. The decree nationalised land throughout the country, enabling military officers and their civilian counterparts to grab land and resources – thus setting the unfortunate precedents seized upon by Babangida and Abacha.<sup>vi</sup>

Olusegun Obasanjo has always acted in the interest of the Northern oligarchy<sup>vii</sup> who have dominated Nigerian politics and the Nigerian army since independence. He handed over power to Shahu Shagari in 1979 in a rigged election and then conspired with General Babangida (his primary backer in the recent elections) to deny the late Chief Abacha his election mandate of June 12, 1993. Obasanjo fared no better in his management of the Nigerian economy. The economy slid into stagnation and inflation rose by 25%, the country became totally dependent on the oil sector for revenues, agriculture was neglected and corruption and social violence came to characterise the political economy.<sup>viii</sup>

Since his election in June 1999, as President of Nigeria, Obasanjo has continued his attack on the Niger Delta by endorsing and maintaining the militarisation of the region. This was culminated in his invasion of Odi town in Bayelsa State, on November 13<sup>th</sup> 1999, a military expedition during which the whole town was destroyed. He has failed to challenge the unilateral establishment of Sharia law in the northern states despite this being contrary to the Nigerian Constitution, further proof of his allegiance to the Northern elite whose backing he relies on. The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), created by Obasanjo, has no grassroots agenda and is designed to actually abort the dreams of the people of the area. The N40 billion fund, together with the 13% derivation fund allocated to the oil-producing states, is presently filling the coffers of the state governors, contractors and the elite in a replica of the massive corruption that has taken place at the federal level throughout Nigeria’s independent history. The only difference now is that they have taken off their military uniforms in a pathetic attempt to portray themselves as democrats. They are the proverbial wolf in sheep’s clothing.

### **Poisoned Lands: The Multinational Oil Companies**

Oil and oil companies are central to the political economy of Nigeria. Since the discovery of this resource in 1958 billions of dollars have been stolen by corrupt leaders and officials, in

collaboration with the multinational oil companies (MNCs). There are five major oil companies operating in the Niger Delta: Shell, Agip, Elf, Chevron and Exxon-Mobil. All five operate joint ventures of varying percentages with the government owned Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC). Shell is the largest, producing half of Nigeria's oil. More than \$12 billion of oil is extracted every year amounting to approximately 90% of Nigeria's foreign exchange revenue.

The relationship between the oil companies and the Nigerian state is a complex and shifting one that goes back to the colonial period. Initially the oil companies were completely in control. In particular the Mineral Oil Ordinance and the Petroleum Profit Tax Ordinance of 1959 enabled oil companies to keep a disproportionately large share of oil profits. The major beneficiaries of this policy were British Petroleum and Royal Dutch/Shell, companies in which Britain had substantial interests.<sup>ix</sup> In post-colonial Nigeria, the monopoly of Shell/BP was to a large extent broken by the entry of other oil companies such as Esso, Agip, and later Chevron, Elf and Mobil. As the Nigerian state became more and more dependent on oil it sought ways to strengthen its relationship with the oil companies and at the same time, through a series of repressive decrees, increase its control over the oil producing communities of the Niger Delta.<sup>x</sup>

Thus the Nigerian state and the oil companies consolidated their relationship which was based on profit over and above any other consideration. In exchange for the oil and gas that is removed from the Niger Delta, the oil companies with the support of the Nigerian state, have left behind ecological destruction, towns and communities reduced to rubble, poverty, prostitution, death by fire, murder and rape.

The oil industry, which consists of exploration, mining and processing, is inherently damaging to the environment even where the best precautions are taken.<sup>xi</sup> Unfortunately the oil companies operating in Nigeria have one of the worst environmental records in the world and their activities have had a devastating impact on local communities. This includes pollution of the air and drinking water; degradation of farm land; damage to aquatic life including fish; disruption of drainage systems; damage to forest areas; and oil fires that have left people dead or with horrific burn injuries and no hospital care. The main causes of the damage to the environment are: oil spillages from pipelines and flow stations; dumping of oil into rivers and creeks; pipelines laid above ground that run through farm land and villages; and for the past 40 years, uninterrupted gas flaring which has resulted in the discharge of noxious gases and soot close to villages and farmland causing irreparable damage to people, animals and plant life. Many of the gas flares occur in massive pits, and so have an even greater impact on the surrounding environment. The top-level flares spew balls of fire 300 feet into the sky.

According to a recent CIA report, 2.5 million barrels of oil were spilled between 1986 and 1996. This is equivalent to 10 Exxon Valdez disasters. Gas flaring and oil spills produce toxic gases and acid rain as well as contributing to global warming. By polluting the rivers, creeks and soil that are the lifeblood of the delta, the people have paid a high price with their livelihood and their well-being. The impact on the health of the people is unimaginable. In addition there are no medical facilities in the towns and villages of the Niger Delta. There is no electricity supply for the few clinics that do exist. There are no medical records to show how many people have died of cancer, heart disease, asthma, or how many babies have been miscarried or poisoned by the toxic gases released from flaring and oil spillage. We do know that thousands have died as a result of gas and pipeline explosions. Pipeline explosions are a daily occurrence in the Niger Delta, where old rusty and leaking pipelines run above ground for miles, criss-crossing homes and farms. One of the worst in terms of numbers was the Jesse fire of 1998 that killed 700 people and left hundreds more with horrific burn injuries with little or no medical facilities or the money to pay for them. To date not one single person has received compensation.

### **Militarisation of Commerce: Alliance of Two Evils**

The term "Militarisation of Commerce" was coined by the late Professor Claude Ake, Africa's foremost development scholar who was killed in a plane crash in November 1996. Shell and the military government of General Abacha have been implicated in his death. What Ake was

referring to was the unholy relationship that led to the collaboration between Shell and the military government in planning his death, that of Ken Saro Wiwa and the Ogoni Eight, and thousands of others that have been maimed and murdered since 1990.

In an interview with Andy Rowell, Ake, responding to the revelation that Shell had been paying the field allowances of military personnel, stated that "Shell has been driving the violence in the Niger Delta by creating excessive concern over security and by thinking of ways to reinforce coercive mechanisms which also drove it to import arms".<sup>xii</sup> Shell and the other oil companies, especially Elf and Chevron, have shown their open hostility and disregard for local communities by working hand in hand with the Nigerian military, providing them with weapons, transport, logistical support and financial payments in order to commit acts of violence against people and property. In return the military serve as personal security force to oil company workers.

In 1990, the people of Umuechem held a peaceful demonstration demanding compensation from Shell. The whole community had come out in force, women, children, elderly and the young. No one imagined that they were risking their lives by demonstrating. At the request of Shell, mobile police unleashed a savage attack on the people, killing, wounding, looting and destroying property. Some 80 people were killed and 495 homes destroyed.<sup>xiii</sup>

Following Umechem, countless communities in the Niger Delta have fallen victim to violence initiated by oil companies and implemented by Nigerian security forces. In Ogoni, Major Paul Okuntimo admitted on separate occasions to Owens Wiwa and Nick Ashton-Jones whilst they were in his detention that he was receiving payments from Shell.<sup>xiv</sup> In a confidential memo to the military governor of Rivers State, Lt. Colonel Komo, on the "Ogoni problem", Okuntimo recommended "wasting operations coupled with psychological tactics." In 1994 the people of Openkebo demonstrated against Chevron; the result was that 16 of their boats were sunk by the police. In May 1998, protestors took control of Chevron's Parabe oil platform in Delta State. After 4 days of negotiations the protestors were ready to leave when three Chevron helicopters arrived carrying Nigerian army and mobile police who then shot at the unarmed protestors before landing. Two people were killed and 30 were wounded. Similar incidents have taken place in Egi, Ikwerre and Ijawland, involving oil companies and their contractors and Nigerian security forces. In November 1999, the Ijaw town of Odi was invaded by the Nigerian army and totally destroyed. Every building was burned down. Hundreds of Odi residents were murdered and beaten including very elderly men and women. The rampaging soldiers left a parting message to the Odi people on the walls of their destroyed homes: "We were sent by government to kill and burn your community, take heart", "Move according to the arrow, kill and burn except government property", "Come take oil now", "Bloody civilians!".

Choba, an Ikwerre, town faced its own crisis in September and October 1999. An American pipeline construction company, Wilbros has been a thorn in the side of the Choba community for many years and the people have held demonstrations against the company's disregard for the community and failure to employ local people. In September 1999, Choba youths peacefully blocked the entrance to Wilbros compound. An agreement was signed on the 17<sup>th</sup> of September between the Choba community and Wilbros in the presence of the Rivers State government. In the agreement Wilbros agreed to build a secondary school, repair a road near the plant, provide water distribution and to remove the security manager, General Oniyide, a former army general.<sup>xv</sup>

Between 17<sup>th</sup> September and October 27<sup>th</sup> the people of Choba repeatedly held peaceful demonstrations outside Wilbros compound, sometimes with drummers and dancers. On the 28<sup>th</sup> October, soldiers and mobile police arrived in Choba. Four people were killed and many others were injured, including one person whose arm was amputated. At least 67 women were raped while several houses were destroyed. The Punch newspaper, based in Lagos, published explicit photographs of women being raped and beaten by men in uniform. Typically, the government claimed the pictures were fake. President Obasanjo, thinking Choba was in Bayelsa State, wrote to the Governor stating that "no soldier would be so beastly as to commit such a criminal act in the full glare of cameramen". He is wrong. They did, and they still do.

Women in particular have suffered abuse as a result of the military occupation. The massive deployment of soldiers and mobile police has exposed women to rape, beatings, prostitution, bestiality and daily harassment. Girls as young as 10 and pregnant women have been raped by military personnel. Rapes are often committed in public or with groups of women. The act of rape is condoned by the military and to date no soldier or member of the mobile police or police has been held to account for the rape of women in the Niger Delta.

The Niger Delta is still under military occupation. People are harassed, raped and brutalised on a daily basis. Oil companies continue to destroy the environment and work with the military and mobile police in oppressing the people and preventing them from making legitimate protest. It is against this background of internal colonisation that the women of the ND present their testimonies.

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### 3. Testimonies : Ijawland

There are approximately 12 million Ijaw people in Nigeria, making them the largest ethnic group in the Niger Delta. The Ijaw nation consists of 52 clans or sub groups, the majority of whom live in Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta States. There are also a few small communities in Akwa-Ibom, Edo, Ondo and Lagos states.

**Kaiama: December 98/ January 99.**

#### **Background**

Kaiama is a small town in Western Ijaw, about half an hour's drive from Yenagoa, the capital of Bayelsa State. Historically Kaiama is famous for being the birth place of Major Isaac Adaka Boro, an Ijaw nationalist who in 1966 proclaimed "the Niger Delta Peoples Republic." Isaac Boro's revolt was driven by his desire for the political and economic freedom of the peoples of the Niger Delta. Unfortunately Boro was defeated by Federal government forces and was sentenced to death. At the outbreak of the civil war in June 1967, he was pardoned by the then head of state, General Yakubu Gowon, and subsequently joined the Federal forces. Major Boro died in 1968, fighting to keep Nigeria united.

Thus it was apt that in December 1998 5,000 Ijaw men and women representing over 40 Ijaw clans, chose the historic town of Kaiama to articulate their aspirations for the Ijaw people, and to demand an end to 40 years of environmental damage and underdevelopment in the region. On the 11<sup>th</sup> December, 1998, the conference issued a communiqué known as the "Kaiama Declaration," and set up the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) to administer the affairs of the Ijaw youths who were drawn from every Ijaw community. The Kaiama Declaration was a ground-breaking document in a number of ways. Firstly it presented clearly and concisely, the historical and socio-economic facts of the Niger Delta. Secondly it challenged the legitimacy of the various decrees that deprived the Ijaw and other minorities of the right to ownership of their land and monetary benefit from the resources produced by that land. Thirdly, it made a commitment to peaceful coexistence and joint struggle with all the ethnic nationalities of the region. Finally the document called for the withdrawal of all oil companies from Ijawland by December 30, (referred to as "Operation Climate Change") until the issue of resource ownership and control has been addressed by the Nigerian Government.

The Kaiama Declaration received tremendous support from other minority groups in the Niger Delta and Nigeria, human and environmental rights organisations, religious leaders and civil liberties groups<sup>5</sup>. However, the Nigerian Military Government led by Abdulsalami Abubakar, responded with threats that any attempt to actualise the Declaration would be robustly resisted by the armed forces. Refusing to be intimidated, the IYC met again on 18 December in Bomadi, a town in Delta State. Here the youths reaffirmed their commitment to "Operation Climate Change" and again reiterated their invitation to the Nigerian Government to engage in dialogue with the Ijaw people on the issues raised in the Kaiama Declaration. Plans were also made for a series of activities to start on December 27<sup>th</sup>, including a press conference, night vigil of prayers, and an official "Ogele" <sup>6</sup> procession in all Ijaw communities with a central one at Bomadi Town, and finally on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January the closure of all oil installations in Ijaw land. Where the oil companies failed to comply, non-violent direct action would be taken to occupy and close down all flow stations.

In response the Nigerian Military Government created a Naval Special Task Force which was similar to the Rivers State Internal Security Task Force used in the murderous attacks on the Ogoni prior to the execution of Ken Saro Wiwa. On December the 29<sup>th</sup> some 1,500 federal

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- v. Over 200 foreign groups from USA, Germany, Netherlands, France etc including the Polaris Institute of Canada, Green Party of Germany, Institute of Policy Studies in Washington DC, Project Underground and more.
  - vi. Ogele is the name of the traditional celebration of the Izon (Ijaw) nation consisting of music and dance.

troops arrived in Yenagoa and surrounding communities and the following day, a state of emergency was declared by the military governor of Bayelsa state, imposing a dusk to dawn curfew on the entire state.

Meanwhile the "Ogele" processions organised by the IYC throughout towns and villages in Ijawland took place peacefully. However this was not the case in the Bayelsa capital, Yenagoa. Here the procession was attacked by soldiers using tanks and automatic weapons in a bid to stop the celebration. Eleven deaths and hundreds of injuries were recorded. The following day more troops arrived and another 4 youths were murdered.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1999 the Nigerian Military Government declared war on the Ijaw people. Following the Yenagoa massacre, the army invaded Kaiama on the 2<sup>nd</sup> January. On the 4<sup>th</sup> January, soldiers using Chevron helicopters and sea trucks invaded Ikiyan and Opia towns. Other towns, Odi, Sabama, Patani, Aven, Bomadi were all occupied by military. The mayhem continued unabated throughout January and February. These communities were ransacked and looted, men and young boys were murdered, tortured and beaten. Women were molested, harassed, beaten and raped. Many people are still missing almost 18 months later. The Nigerian army and Mobile Police engaged themselves in a blood bath which left over 200 dead and thousands wounded. Once control of the area had been established by the military they settled down to occupy Ijawland and continue up to the present time to terrorise communities and commit endless atrocities.

### **Testimonies, 7<sup>th</sup> March 2000**

#### **1) Blessing**

"I wake up for morning and come see the army everywhere. Fear drive me go outside then I ran into soldiers who started to beat me. I ran from them back to my compound (she had slept at a friend's house that night) and come and see the army break the door. I fear again but think that since I am a woman they [army] will leave me but they came back and drove me from my house. I was very angry and wanted to fight with them but I could not go back to my house at that time, so I went to my friend's house and stayed there. The army stay up to one month before MOPO [mobile police] came and until now they are still in Kaiama. I think say many woman get rape but for me they [army] cannot fuck me. Shame will not let them speak. One woman who is married, MOPO come and rape in her husband's presence then her husband came and drove her out. Soldiers come and fuck woman anyhow at anytime. Everyday they worry any girl they see. They come force girl to "befriend them" and when the girl refuse they say we will beat you and rape you. Because I stubborn and no have any fear they no fit befriend me, I will not agree to be with them. One time I think that if I make friend then the other soldiers will not worry me so I agree that the soldier buy me drinks. He come and want to force me to fuck with him but I refused. Many girls fear too much so they agree to go with the soldier for peace sake.

Many people fear to come to Kaiama up till today. Me, I am not able to do my trading because of fear to travel. Every time there is checkpoint - If you are Ijaw you are looking for trouble to travel today, you don't know who be your enemy and who be your friend! Even in Port [Port Harcourt] army came and accuse me of Egbesu<sup>7</sup>.

At that time (the invasion of Kaiama) MOPO come look for any boy or man. They have name of the youths they want to kill but I don't know who give them these boys names. The MOPO harass the boys all the time and some fear to stay in Kaiama because of the MOPO everywhere".

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vii. Egbesu is the spirit of the Ijaw. "The offensive and defensive power of God used to protect righteous people from the forces of evil. It is used to enforce the divine order in the natural realm, so that all things coming into being can take place in their own space and time without infringing upon other things" Ijo Story - Izon Historical Documentation, 1999

## **2) Elderly Mother/ Wife of Okuboke Ofoniama, Chief of Kaiama, murdered by Nigerian soldiers**

Mother - "I stay in my house at that time, soldiers were everywhere. Three of them came to my house and broke the door down. They take my son and I have not seen him since that day. I have no money as my son used to look after me. Before I used to farm but I no fit farm now, I am weak. I no feel to do anything I just wait make I die, I no fit eat, every day I worry what will happen now."

Wife - " My husband dey [was in] Yenagoa with his wife. When he hear what happen in Kaiama he come see for himself. Since that day when the soldier came and take him I have not seen him. I stay in Yenagoa but they I hear say they kill people and start to worry for my husband. Sometime those who have wounds they bring them to Yenagoa but I check and did not see my husband. After I come hear that they kill my husband at the Motor park. (the Chief was one of many townsmen that were taken to a nearby army camp and tortured after which he was murdered).

I get nine children and have no money to send them to school. Only me to feed them and my husband's mother. I get some work for N3,500 and small farm but this is not enough for all these children. If I borrow money then I pay double. Everyday I am having headache and worry how we will manage now. Nobody to help.

## **3) Tamarapre, Young Married Woman.**

I dey inside my house that day when soldier come. They came and broke all the windows and begin to shout "where is your husband" They come and beat my husband with chair and then carry him to motor park. They slap me for my face. My children were crying and I begged them to please not to beat me and to save my husband. One soldier tell me to go outside then after another soldier say make I go inside and stay in my house. I did not see my husband for 3 days even I try to take him food to eat but the soldiers would not agree and tell me to go. I fear by that time, I hear say many people die in the camp. "

## **4) a Ekpoeneikamio, Elderly Married Woman**

"I was in Kaiama on the day the soldiers came. I stay at my farm till late by which time when I reach town army is everywhere. I hear soldier kill people by the bridge (Kaiama bridge) but I cannot run because my children dey for house. When I reach my house we lock the door and hide in the back. The soldiers came and wounded me when they push open the door and I beg them please, I be old woman they should leave me. They hold their gun on my body and tell me to bring water. They beat my husband and by that time I cannot even know what the soldiers are doing. I try to help my husband."

"Anywhere there are soldiers if you don't look out you are in trouble. When I hear gun sound I am always afraid. I am no longer happy to go to the farm but I have to go to feed my family".

## **b Solomon Boro, School Teacher and Ekpoeneikamio's Husband:**

"On 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1998 I was busy organising the teachers salaries that remained to be paid. I heard the soldiers were coming so I packed the money into water proof bags and locked my house and left. When I came out of my house the army were almost in front of the house so I ran back in side. The soldiers entered and dragged me outside. They took me to their Captain at which time one of the soldiers tried to kick me. I managed to move quickly and the soldier fell. From now they started to beat me. They beat me and kicked me and keep asking for the Chief's house but I did not tell them. They beat me senseless and now I am almost blind. They left me on the road and one woman came and help me back to my house. I have lost most of my sight but I still try to work. The soldiers took the salaries and looted my house. They took everything from the house. When the soldiers came to Odi I am afraid and I travel to Opukoma with my wife for safety."

### **5) Helen, Widow**

On the day the soldiers came I ran with my 3 children to the bush. At that time I was pregnant. My husband lock the house then follow me run. I think that he is at my back but I am hearing gun shot. After I come and see my husband is shot by the soldier when he is running. They steal all my property and break everything. Now I have no money, I can only collect firewood to sell and some small farming. Some time the church help me. Now my heart is cut.

### **6) Rhoda, Widow**

At that time when the soldiers came I was at home with my husband. The soldiers came and arrested my husband and took him to the motor park. When there he was beaten and tortured with the others. His face was cut, nose broken, lips swollen and wounded everywhere. He had be cut on his head with an axe. When they took my husband I ran with my children to Opukoma (nearby village) to my father's house until after 2 days I came back to Kaiama. At that time there was no one in the town, no medicines. After my husband went to Yenagoa but by that time it was too late for him to recover. My husband died three months ago from the wounds he received during the invasion.

I have four children, the smallest is 2 years and the senior one 16. My children do not go to school now. I have small money only from a fish pond but I cannot go there all the time (Fish ponds are seasonal and don't operate in the rainy season) I cannot farm now - I have blood pressure.

## **Imiringi Town**

### **Background**

Although Imiringi was not occupied at time of the Kaiama/Yenagoa crisis or during the Odi invasion of November 1999, it is close enough to these towns for the people to know what happened and to have been affected by the acts of violence that took place particularly against women and youths.

Imiringi is located close to a flow station and its accompanying gas flare that burns throughout the year. There are 32 oil wells owned by Shell, and miles and miles of exposed pipelines running through the surrounding farmland. I saw the gas flare at the flow station. It was a chilling sight: a huge mass of fire whose shape changed with the wind like a demon squirming with pain. The fire was burning in a vast pit and the hissing sound of escaping gas could be heard. The heat was immense even from the road and it was impossible to stay too long.

On our way to Imiringi we came across many oil wells and decided to investigate one. The oil wells are close to the roads and are not protected or fenced off in any way. Sometimes there may be one lone well whilst other times up to three or four wells in one site. On this site we found a well with escaping gas and full of oil. Inside was a very large bird, that had obviously fallen in and got stuck. It was still alive but unable to move awaiting a slow painful death.

### **Testimonies, 11<sup>th</sup> March 2000**

#### **1) Young Female**

Since 1982 the soil has changed and crops do not grow well. It is not because of overuse because we know how to use our lands and are crops are rotated. It is because of the flares. The soil is now too hard - before a small child can turn the soil but now it is too hard. The yield of crops is very poor and there is lack of fish in this area."

We have no help from Shell. They have brought pollution and no development.

## **2) Women Leader**

The villagers are mainly farmers and fisher women. Oil exploration has resulted in a loss of crops and fishing stock. Gas flares affects the land and sometimes we have had earth tremors. This is something new. We have informed Shell and the government about the tremors but nothing has been done. Shell has been here for donkey years and they have done nothing. The road (to Imiringi) is only two years old and was built only because of the pressure from the community. All the schools were built by church missions.

My mother was wounded by a pipeline burst when she was passing in the farm. I have not seen any repairs to the pipelines by Shell. Women are complaining of eyesight problems and also breathing problems. The gas flares also affect the drinking water and the food crops.

We have not been occupied here in Imiringi but still we are affected by what happened in Odi and Kaiama. Even last night when we had a funeral the MOPO were here and we did not like it. We did not see why they had to be in town.

The government has done nothing to improve our area. The government is not allowing us to sit in our houses and speak. Our children are not educated - our sources of livelihood, farms and fishing are poor. The government does not want us to improve.

We support the youth movement - any movement is positive. No employment - oil companies should employ indigenous people both male and female. They (Shell) are toiling our land but not giving us work to do, so what do you want us to do. Shell they know what to do but they will not do it until they are forced.

We the mothers of these children (the youths) we suffer a lot as we are poor - any attack will affect us. Every crisis affects us as the town is not comfortable - people run to the bush, they fled for their lives. Even when the unrest is somewhere else we feel afraid.

We are not happy about Odi and the way the government behaved. The military should not act like this in a democratic government.

## **Odi Town, November 1999**

### **Background**

Odi town lies along the eastern verge of the River Nun in Bayelsa State, about 30 minutes drive from Kaiama. It is an agricultural and fishing community with an approximate population of 60,000. On November 19<sup>th</sup> 1999, Nigerian troops invaded the town. 1,500 soldiers; 4 armoured personal carriers (APC) mounted with machine guns; 3 eighty-one millimetre mortar guns and artillery guns; two naval patrol sea craft mounted with machine guns; and several conventional machine guns were deployed against Odi.<sup>8</sup> The town was reduced to rubble; over 200 civilians including women, children and the elderly were killed. And because every single building except the bank, two primary schools, the health center and Anglican church were demolished, thousands were left homeless.

The invasion of Odi was the culmination of 12 months of military occupation of Ijawland. The "democratic" civilian government of Olusegun Obasanjo decided to take up arms against its own people under the pretext of restoring law and order to the region. In late October 12 policemen were kidnapped and later on the 4<sup>th</sup> November were murdered in Odi by unknown criminals. Prior to the kidnapping, the leaders of Odi had written to the State police commissioner complaining about the newly arrived criminal elements. There was no response from the Commissioner. Again, when the policemen were kidnapped, the leaders appealed to the police to make efforts to find and arrest those responsible.

Following the murder of the policemen, President Obasanjo threatened, on 10 November, to declare a state of emergency in Bayelsa State if the criminals were not caught within 14 days. It is important to mention that large numbers of policemen and other security personnel had recently lost their lives in such other cities as Lagos, Kano and Shagamu without the government threatening to send in troops. Nine days later "Operation Hakuri II," the invasion of Odi, took place under the guise of a "police action to restore law and order". However, in a press conference on November 25<sup>th</sup>, the Minister of Defense, General Theophilus Danjuma,<sup>9</sup> explained the real motive of the military expedition:

"This Operation Hakuri II was initiated with the mandate of protecting lives and property, particularly oil platforms, flow stations, operating rig terminals and pipelines refineries and power installations in the Niger Delta."<sup>xvi</sup>

In other words, Odi was destroyed because of oil. Another strategy employed by the Government was revealed by Chief of Army Staff, Major General Victor Malu who announced the replacement of indigenous army officers serving in the Niger Delta with those from other states.

The invasion of Kaiama and Odi do not tell the full story. Since January 1<sup>st</sup> 1999 hundreds of Ijaw youths, women and children have been killed and beaten and properties looted and burnt in towns and villages. Nigerian army and navy personnel together with mobile police and often with the aid or at the behest of oil companies (Shell, Chevron and Elf) have been responsible for these acts of violence.

### **Testimonies - 20<sup>th</sup> March 2000**

#### **Girls at the Community Secondary School, Odi**

On Saturday as we stay for village our town boys come inside the village and tell us this thing is too big, our mothers with our fathers should run. Our mothers came and packed all of us with our loads. Our mother did not even have a canoe, so as we reach the waterside and we have no canoe, now we have to start to beg anybody who has one. We begged but all the canoes were full up. We called our father - our father say he will not go anywhere, he will stay and look at this

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viii. Situation Report on invasion of Bayelsa - INCUSIA 23/11/99

ix. Formerly a member of Obasanjo's military government

one from the starting to the ending. After we see one canoe that is far up so we carry the canoe go. We came to one place, that was no good, we came to a second place that was worse than the first. We come to Ocolba - and we stay there. After we hear they kill one of our brothers - Perikeme then after we hear say they have scattered all the houses, burn all the house them. The time that we come back, we stay for village, no food to eat - the governor send some food, gari with rice and we manage that. We come and see dead bodies on the road. The army people they beat my father they mash him down. As he was asleep they told him to come outside. They began to say my papa is a juju man.

As the thing happen on Saturday.....we come back see dead bodies on the road with a smell, some people dead for water - we come our house and see all of our things have been burnt. That is how it happened.

### **Primary School Teacher, Odi**

When the soldiers came we were all in our various houses, we only heard that soldiers have come and surrounded every where. Since the soldiers were coming we were all afraid and we started packing our things, things that we can carry. Everyone started packing and running away we are not able to stand soldiers we carried a few things we could lay our hands on and we left. When we came back we saw all our houses food money had been burn down, all burnt down money that we left in the house. Since (then) we have been trying to manage with nothing again. Some of things were looted, many of our things. We are lying on the ground nothing to sleep on.

We ran to a nearby village called Odoni. We went by canoe with others and my family. We did not have a canoe and we could not even swim. We begged a canoe owner to carry us me and my people. We spent one week in the village and we could see Odi burning and we knew our houses were being burnt. We were crying that our houses are finished. We also heard the gun shots and knew people were being killed.

Other people ran into the bush. Those who could not get boats ran into the nearby bushes, they were all here most of them were just right inside. You know that time was a flood period and water everywhere, the whole of the bush was covered with water and some of them were standing on top of trees, hanging like that for days. According to them when they come back home they met with the army people, during the period they were burning they met them and they started frightening them, they begged, pleaded with them. There was no food for them as they had stayed in the bush for a long period up to one week. Women not men, only women - men were dead they killed them.

There was another woman they captured near here, she came out with her children because they couldn't stand it (the bush), so the army people captured her and they were feeding her with gari to drink throughout the period the road was blocked. Most people suffered like that when they were tired they came out. The soldiers did that - gave people burnt gari to drink. So after burning your house they give you your own burnt garri to drink. So some people whose yams they burnt they will give them the burnt yams to eat - go and cook.

People are still missing - some teachers and pupils have not returned as yet. We don't know whether they are dead or alive. Even our school children are missing.

### **Amasin, School Teacher, Odi**

One afternoon we are at home. My building is at the roadside and I saw people running. I asked them - there is nothing to talk about, that the guns over there it is as if army people are shooting so we went to the river bank. You know you could not stand on the ground, the ground was shaking even the houses were shaking as if they want to fall down. So I started running down with that fear - I heard the army shooting, even the ground was shaking from the noise of the guns, the houses too. I had no canoe. Everything was burnt - books, my properties, my things for teacher's college, NCE and University of Port Harcourt certificates, everything.

I left everything to run for my dear life and pleaded with people to let me into their canoe with my children. It was near to evening time. I pleaded and one old woman that was going, I went with her. At that time my children, I pleaded with people to take my children - I don't even know the destination they were going or where they ran to. Before I got to Odoni village it was night and it was as if the gun shot was following me through - I managed in that place. I was hearing the gun shot but did not see any soldiers, it was as if the people (army) were behind you - they were shelling and no stopping just continuous noise KEKEKEKEKEKE just like that until you get the heavier one going BOOOM BOOOM. When I get there, you know I don't know anyone in that Odoni community, my mother is from Delta state so I pleaded for people to take me to that area. From there I started to trace my children, I don't know where my husband was. As God would have it, none of them died and at the end all of us came here. Property is nothing and we are all starting again.

People were crying, those that lost their children - some people said they have not seen their own, people started crying even to breathe in this community there was no food and flies so many flies everywhere. When I came [back] I did not see any dead bodies - visitors were coming so they had packed all the corpse but flies, you cannot eat".

FEAR. If you are not bold enough you cannot step into this place, you cannot step in. Fear and everywhere quiet with sorrow; even people that were calm when we see ourselves people started crying just like that. Nothing to write home about. Only god strengthened the heart of man if not by this time, even this man that died it was hypertension that killed him. When he came and saw his house like that he died, just like that. Two other women died like that, out of shock at seeing their houses burnt.

For me it is not because of one or two boys but in Rivers State, in the Ogoni area, the government went and destroyed them like that. So now again here I think it is this oil thing that has made them to come to fight like this. They wanted to eliminate everyone in the community in this Bayelsa, in this Niger Delta, because of this oil. They want to finish us get rid of ....because the oil they are using they are not helping us with - so everything - there is a biased something because up till now there is no sympathy call by the head of state - no one has said sorry. It is outsiders that are coming to help. I think they have bias against us because of the oil. That's what I am thinking.

When people come out of the bush the soldiers ask "Where are your children, where are your boys" - because those that could not escape in canoe fled to the bush and when they were tired they came out. They were not killing women, and were starting to killing boys alone that means - you know the youths they are the future of the community so they want to eliminate them to just keep the community like that. This bias and everything is what caused the problem.

#### **Elderly Woman (translation)**

When the thing started it was towards evening time. She (her daughter) ran to her to say that they should pack that she shouldn't stay but she said that she is old that even if army people come they would not kill her so she would not go. So the children left her, they could not bear it and left her in the house. She doesn't know where they go. In the night she couldn't sleep because this is how the gun was coming but she doesn't know where the gun shot was coming. In the morning, the army men came like soldier ants, there were many and they met her in the house where she was living. When the army met her they held her at gun point. She was shouting that "Jesus let him come and help me." Some soldiers said this woman is a Christian so we shouldn't kill her; so they spared her. They broke the doors of the house and started packing properties - her grandchildren's things - they brought a big lorry to pack all the things, they looted all the properties. She pleaded with them not to burn the house she was living so it was not burnt but they packed all the properties. She had no food so they gave her gari to drink. Later some of them slept in her house.

#### **Elderly Woman (translation)**



One child took my canoe so I could not run. As it happened like that the whole town was deserted, people were shouting that this one has died. I saw everything. After that time the soldiers were coming. I saw them looting properties, they were burning houses, I was sitting there watching them. Even now because of the sores I had on my leg I couldn't run so all the soldiers that came I saw them. Poverty and hunger overtook me as nothing left for me to eat. The soldiers were before me. They were breaking into my house and took everything - my clothes, my money; they took everything. There was hunger everywhere. At last when they saw that I was very hungry they started sympathising with me and asked me, "Mama, have you eaten and I said no." That was how I was living till everything ended.

### **Elderly Lady (translation)**

I cannot farm because of the pain in my leg. I just manage. No tools to use but others are suffering more. No where to sleep no clothes to wear. During running to the bush a snake bite me - (horrid looking bite wound) even now hunger is worrying me there is hunger everywhere. This is how we are staying. I ran into the bush, into a Boro pit (large hole) by myself. I cannot walk; my leg hurts. In the bush I did not eat - only prayers. I am hungry that's why my body is shaking.

### **Young Woman**

My 15 year old son is missing. I came back and couldn't see him. I could not see my son even his corpse I cannot see him even till now - 15 yrs - we were all in this house but when we heard the gun shots everyone take on his heels. My son ran to a different direction to myself and others.

I ran to the bush, there was no food to eat there was nothing. I stayed in the bush for 12 days as the hunger was so much we started plucking leaves to chew and water to drink - my husband ran on his own too. We were scattered. When the soldiers left I came back and I saw my husband. He is looking for our son but we cannot see him.

Since I haven't seen my son there is nothing I can do - I have six children and my son is the last one - I am feeling that I will not see him again because I heard that some corpse were buried like that and some thrown away.

I am not happy at all my house is burnt, I am crying now, my clothes only this I am wearing is what I have but I am not happy at all about what they have done. Even my son is dead the house I am staying is not even my house.

### **Elderly Sisters: Nellie and Inko Ogoriba (translation)**

We stayed because we could not run; our legs are not good. Throughout the night the place was burning - we were afraid. In the morning the army came to attack us. As they came they said we should come out of the house, they were shooting then they burnt the house so now we have nothing. After burning the houses they gripped our necks and said they would cut it - they told us that because we were elderly they would not kill us but we should go and bring the children so they can kill them.

Five of their children have died we cannot see their corpse - three girls and two boys - they have not been seen since.

### **80 year Old Woman –(translation)**

Soldiers came into their house and dragged her husband out. She followed but they told her to go back inside. Then she heard a shot and came out to find her husband lying on the floor, shot. She was crying and begging them to help her bury her husband but they refused and said "Can't you see dead bodies everywhere"? A neighbour came and helped her to dig a little and then her sister came to help and they managed to drag the body into the shallow grave. It wasn't deep

enough but they managed to cover it. The next day because it rained the face of her husband was exposed so they had to dig for more mud to cover the body up again.

### **Claris Tokoni Gagariga, Market Woman**

**Sokari Ekine:** Tell me, what are some of the events that happened before the invasion?

**Claris Tokoni Gariga:** We heard that the armed robbers came to the market to rob people. And after that we heard that police that these mobile police were coming and that they killed these mobile police all over the place.

**SE** Do you know why the MOPO came to Odi at that time?

**CTG** The first time, the MOPO came and arrested some of the armed robbers. Then they brought them back. So this time, as the MOPO were coming down to Odi, what we heard was that they (armed robbers) had killed them.

**SE** How many?

**CTG** Some say five, some say seven.

**SE** And these alleged killers were armed robbers?

**CTG** Yes.

**SE** So those people that say the killers were part of the youth movement, was that true?

**CTG** No - I can't say for that one. But the armed robbers - some are from our village and some from other villages. They ran from Yenagoa black market.

**SE** After they (the police) were killed what happened?

**CTG** Even the government (State government) sent people to investigate and they said it was armed robbers that killed the policemen. So everyone was afraid at that time; women ran away from the village. This was before the invasion. People were frightened so ran away. But when the governor sent a message that the investigation found it was armed robbers people who had run away came back. Most of the people that ran were women; men didn't run.

The women came back and then suddenly the army came - we did not expect it - on the 20<sup>th</sup> November at 4pm. We knew they had arrived from the sound of their guns - and some bullets fall in our yard so everyone ran because we saw the bullets before we ran. Then we asked what is happening and they said army has come to kill us.

I was not in the village when you came to visit. I would have showed you what they write on my house - they said they are going to visit Odi in five years and Bayelsa will be silenced for ever - they wrote so many things. As we ran inside the bush we don't know what happened. As we ran in the bush the guns were shooting. You see the helicopter they used to check for us as we were running inside the bush - they were just spying on us - they are now shooting at the people in a far range so we know it is the helicopter that is giving information as to where to shoot us. As we remained there for three days so we sit down on top of the water.

We are five women; some are elders. My elders and my juniors, we all came together in my house so we ran together into the bush. We have no food we have nothing - I did not take anything because we got this shooting unexpectedly so after three days we ran and bust out at river Niger. We are on the River Nun and River Niger is on the other side so we have to run - we came out by Patani - up Patani we walked and we swim as that time it was flooded so that time

we had to swim in some creeks. Because at that time the guns are near you however you run the guns are coming closer to you. Five days of shelling - tanks and automatic weapons - some big big bullets some small. Some enter the bush as one palm tree fall.

When we came out at the River Nun a ferry took us across to river to Elebiri and then we escape. When we come to passing our river we saw they were burning all our houses we could see it - what we are thinking is that when they have burned all our houses where are we to live so better we die in the forest. It is better and some women died in the forest because when they come out and saw their houses burning they ran into the bush saying it is better to die in the bush than come out and those army people kill them, so they go back [into the bush].

My grandmother, my mother was in the house she said she is not running she is 85 - she already dead so she is not running. By the time they announce the war is over we could not find her. Until to day we have never seen the corpse. Maybe she fought with them and they killed her; nobody knows. I made my 70 birthday and got so many things I have TV, radio, cooker, fridge, bed. All those things are there so maybe she did not allow them to loot these things and they kill her or burn her there.

When the announcement was made, the governor said the war is over; everyone should come back. So it was two weeks before we got to our village. When we got there everything burned down and things looted.

When I came back the house is demolished, everything looted, what they didn't loot they burned. I saw dead bodies in the town - one man in the back of the Anglican church - he was thrown there. Three of them, then in the back of my house they dump two corpse there.

**SE** About how many people were killed during that period?

**CTG** Oh the young boys, the young boys - some just going to the school to read, were killed, some by running they were killed, so many of them, my senior sister has lost her three boys, she is alive, around 5, 15, 16 they were killed. That's my senior sister.

**SE** I was told many drowned.

**CTG** Even that one - even the chief of our place - the son - his two sons, drowned as they capsized, so many.

**SE** Why do you think the Nigerian government sent the Army?

**CTG** Yes, what I think is because of the oil, that our boys were writing some letters that the oil belongs to us and as they never did any good to us they should give something to them so they know say this oil belongs for us. So for that they came and finish us up. I believe it is because of oil because if not, everywhere these armed robbers are there and the armed robbers were killing us too. We reported this to the police and they collected seven of them before they brought them back, so why did thing this happen to us. So it is because of the oil.

Armed robbers are in other areas killing people but the government did not do anything but for us there is oil. So they come and kill us because of it.

**SE** Since the end of all these terrible things, what has the government done to compensate or repair properties?

**CTG** We haven't seen anything, only the foreign companies giving us some rehabilitating, for clothes, food, and canopies. Recently the governor came and gave us 40 bundles of zinc. But foreign companies, and personal people.

Now that we are crying we want to go and demonstrate for the governor but we are frightened as the army say they will finish us, so if we go maybe they will finish us because we didn't see them when they came that is why they didn't finish us. So now we do not know what they will do.

That is what they wrote - they said they will finish all Ijaws they want to finish the whole Bayelsa.

**SE** So what can we do?

**CTG** We want people to help us so the government will rebuild the houses they destroyed.

**SE** What about the prisoners - the youths charged with murder?

**CTG** Those youths...I don't know... I only know one man, Larry; he is innocent. He tried his best when they killed these armed robbers. He tried so we will hold them out for the government so why did they arrest Larry? But the rest I don't know. It may be some of them that are inside are innocent. But it is armed robbers, yes.

**SE** As a woman how do you feel about those who have been trying to get the government and oil companies to compensate the people?

**CTG** Yes if the youth can try to do that I am even happy for them, because as the young ones is already killed they are the only ones left. If you come back from Odi as a youth they will tell you, you are (egbesu). The whole of Nigeria everywhere has this special juju. But here they say we have this Juju, so that is why they kill us. It (Egbesu) is not a bad juju, it is a spiritual juju and because of it Ijaw people do not steal - if you see Ijaw boys stealing it is those from abroad like Port Harcourt, not in the village.

**SE** What of the women affected, the farmers, fisher women?

**CTG** It affected us very much that we can't even go to the farm and farm because so many canoes lost, we have no knife no hoes, if you are 10 there is only two, so if this year we cannot farm well, then next year, starvation hungry will come.

Next year we are under starvation because of the quantity we will produce. Then fishing, in our place it is when the flood comes that they make canoe but this time no body makes canoe so we have no canoe no fishing to get our food. So it affect us. May be I haven't but my sisters have little children so when you don't farm what will you eat, not to say we are working and get a pension or money from the government no - we are not workers so it is hard for we women and we have no clothes, this suit is what they gave us. So now that we couldn't do anything and this one tear what will we do. We women are suffering and the men so many are dead, so many orphans and so many widows and who will look after them? The whole thing affect the whole village so nobody will help look after the other person - we are really suffering we don't know the suffer we have now we cant express it. We can't sleep in the night it is bare ground, and the mat they gave us it is not sufficient. You take two wrappers one on the ground and then you are left with one. That is what we are asking the government to build temporary accommodation.

**SE** How do you feel about the Nigerian government?

**CTG** That's what we are saying this Nigerian government - you hear that Lagos and Ijaw are fighting, then you hear that Igbos and Hausa they are fighting; even now Okrika and Eleme are fighting - that means that the government is not fair. Obasanjo is not a godly man, if he is a godly man he can provide that loving to everybody, I don't see this government is trying to cooperate ourselves together. They don't burn other cities they are fighting so they now go burn Odi.

Returning to Odi. When I got back to Odi that day I was mad I cant even control myself, I was rolling up and down half naked so I don't know what properties I will remove, so I didn't remove anything, I have TV, fridge, bed, generator, so when I got to that place and I mad I nearly killed

myself. But my children were around me and that saved me. Because I am 70 years old and I cannot work to get those things again. I don't know when God will call me but now they say all Odi people are criminals. In the whole of Ijaw, Odi people love strangers more than any other village if they don't know they should ask. And why government come and do this, is it because of the oil?

I will go to Obasanjo and he will kill me; it is better. We thought Obasanjo will defend us, we are all under him and we thought he would protect us but it is Obasanjo that punished us. Why? We don't know. I am still asking why Obasanjo and government did this thing to Odi. They do this thing to Odi and they have the guts to write " We will kill all Ijaws"; "Bayelsa will be silenced forever"; "This land is for soldiers, not for Ijaw"; "We don't finish Odi that is our work"; We were sent by the government to kill and burn your community"; "The government has given us the right to destroy everything"; "We go kill all Ijaw with our gun". These are what is written on my house.

These are my fellow Nigerians. Why, why did Obasanjo let this people to come and destroy us? Are we not the same Nigerians?

We can't do otherwise now than to say we are Nigerians. But we take it as if we are not Nigerians; that is why Obasanjo treat us like this - we are not part of him, if we are part of him, can he cut one hand and leave the other hand?

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#### **4. Testimonies from Isokoland**

Isokoland is in the northern fringe of the Niger Delta, and lies between the Urhobo, to whom they are closely related, to the west and the Ijaw to the east.

The crisis in Isoko was sparked off by a series of inter and intra ethnic violence. Hostility and tensions between and within ethnic minorities in Nigeria are a direct consequence of colonial and post-colonial processes and policies such as the imposition of artificial and often incomprehensible boundaries, increasing confiscation of land and centralisation of government which has been used to legitimise the dispossession of resources from oil producing communities.

A policy of divide and rule has been used by the Government and the oil companies in the Niger Delta, with devastating effect on the local communities. Examples of divide and rule tactics abound: differential compensation to neighbouring towns and villages; bribes to a particular section of a community to ensure that they 'prevent' other community members from protesting against the behaviour of oil companies; reorganise local government areas and community boundaries so as to include and exclude communities from what little oil revenue may be arbitrarily made available by the state and Federal governments; and playing on historical tensions between neighbouring ethnic nationalities and communities.

In 1999 three separate but related events involving Oleh, Ozoro and Olomoro towns in Isokoland and Ughelli in Urhoboland took place all of which have a bearing on what happened in Oleh Town in October 1999.

On January 5 members of the Isoko National Youth Movement (INYM) shut down five flow stations belonging to Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) in Isoko North and South Local Government Areas (Oleh and Ozoro towns). The shut down was in protest against the neglect of the area by the government and Shell. The demands of the INYM included the payment of compensation for over three decades of environmental damage caused by oil exploration, the employment of Isoko nationals and jobs for Isoko contractors registered with Shell. Following a promise by the State Administrator, Navy Captain Walter Feghabo, to mediate between the oil companies and the INYM and the Isoko Development Union (including the elders of the two towns) the Flow stations were allowed to operate again.

However, because the promise to mediate was not forthcoming, the INYM again closed the five flow stations on January 19<sup>th</sup>. Finally an agreement was reached when the oil company promised to meet and discuss the issues with the INYM.

Two further incidents took place in June and July between two Isoko communities and between Ewvreni, a small community in nearby Ugheli in Delta state and members of the Olomoro community in Isoko South. Both incidents involved the Mobile Police and some 50 people were shot by them.

##### **Oleh Town**

Oleh town is the headquarters of Isoko South Local Government Area, in Delta State. There are about 27 oil wells in the area. Here the hostilities were between members of the Isoko Youth Movement based in Oleh and those based in Olomoro. The trouble was sparked off by a dispute over the sharing of condemned pipes belonging to Shell, in November 1999. During the hostilities, the youth leader from Oleh was shot. This sparked off a further conflict between members of the Youth Movement. Again the Mobile Police were sent in. The result was the death of many innocent people including children, women and the elderly and the total destruction of property as the Mobile Police went on a rampage of violence in Oleh.

##### **Testimonies, 14 March 2000**

### **1) Comfort Ogoro, Housewife**

All the women ran away. The farms were left and the markets closed, all the goods in the market were destroyed. The market is not as normal as before. The youths from another town came and fought with the youths of Oleh town. The youths went to the police station and stole some guns and then they kill a policeman. The MOPO came to Oleh town at this time. They destroyed all the properties of the youth leader. The MOPO burned houses and looted properties. Everybody ran to different villages. I ran to Irri because it was close. I ran with my three children and my husband followed us into the bush, we ran by foot.

On returning I felt weak, everybody was hungry with nothing to feed or buy in the town. No gari, no fish. We had to go to Irri to get food to buy. This is 3 hours walking plus to carry the food.

We women struggle on how our children will eat and get education. We were affected as no one could go to the farm. We could not carry our load (farm produce) at that time. During that time if you hear a gun shot you will fear. We do not fear the youth again, we fear only the MOPO. A bullet could enter your house by mistake. MOPO supposed to come and help us but they terrorize the whole town.

### **2) Young Woman with Child (Through interpreter)**

In November, at that time we come from travel. As we come now from travel we stay at our side. The day when the thing happened we are in our house. When the MOPO come they come shoot their gun. As they shoot the gun it came and reached my child. We were inside the house and the MOPO were outside shooting anyhow, when the bullet reached my child. We carried him to the hospital. While we were in the hospital the MOPO came and kill my husband's sister. On the second day, that day they burned the house, all our load they burn. We don't have anything. It is people who have given me these clothes. The child (*12 year old boy*) is still in the mortuary as we do not have money to claim the child.

The thing that happened has happened - nothing can bring back my child so better I just forget it.

### **Young Girl**

We are sleeping at home at that time. The youths were fighting with youths from Olomoro town. I run with my younger brother to Adah village where my brother stay. I ran with no clothes. After three days, my mother came to say that MOPO have come, so we stay another one week in the village. When we return from the village no one was around so all the family stay inside the house. Nobody walk on the road at that time. We all fear, no food except what is in the house. Sometime we manage small food. My uncle hide for bush for three days.

### **Ester Igelige, Women Leader, Oleh Town**

Many houses were burned down, many things destroyed, we loose all our property. Some people loose their money, everything concerning trading material many things lost. Some people now are not even staying in this town because all their house, all their property has burned down. There is a lot of suffering. Both men and women they are suffering in this town. Up till now there are some children who are still missing.

I was here when the MOPO came. We didn't run, but when it reached some stage the MOPO came here (*her house*) and shoot for inside this room so because of that we have to run and hide small. By way running we lost our things even money got lost. So since this time people in this town are suffering. They have no place to stay, they have nothing again in their life. The MOPO they hold gun, hold cutlass, you cannot even say anything to them because you have to run for your dear life. When they (MOPO) were breaking the house, fear entered everybody so they had to run. They asked me whether there are some youths staying in this compound. I told

them I didn't have any child under youths. We start to beg them. By begging them, by that time they have already break the door, before they left.

Let the Federal government come and assist our people here. When you enter our bush now, all the cassava has burnt because of all this oil problem. Where they used to draw oil from the land, the land is very hot and there is nothing that you will plant that will bear better fruit. So women are suffering here badly. Mostly the widows because in our area when you lost your husband, finish they leave the children for only you to take care.

### **Mrs. Ezimeruw Imiko, Sister of Murdered Youth Leader**

On 16<sup>th</sup> November, everywhere was ablaze, everybody was running. I couldn't find anyone in my home but heard they ( *her family* ) are wanted by the police. The compound is a living ghost land Everyone fled. I heard that my father is in police detention. My younger brother, I have not seen him up till now. The wife of the deceased (her brother) and two children are still at large. She ran away with the children. A few months ago I received a letter from the Council chairman telling me to come and carry my late brother to bury. He can't even ask me about anything. I told him I can not bury him as I have no money for the burial. I haven't seen a situation whereby the people who own the deceased are arrested. Because people are afraid they cannot even come in to help us.

They should bring my father, an old man of 95 who is in detention. They should make a home for him to stay. I want the human rights people to investigate this matter; to bring my daddy, my relations that are at large, my brothers, to search for them for me and make a home for them. Even my mother is at large. After my daddy ( *was arrested* ) they killed two (more) of my brothers. They were shot.

From that day, I have not been well, I have been in shock from this thing. I am not well, this thing has affected me till now. Things were too great for me. They killed my brothers, arrested my father, all my family is at large.

### **Ozoro Town**

#### **1) Chief Mrs Rebecca Ewome**

We are so involved that at times we don't really know where to go or who to contact. So many youths with nothing to do. The youths have really tried but they don't get the support they are supposed to get from elders. They have a different approach. Youths want Shell to bring things straight to the community. Elders want to engage in dialogue. The youths are tired of talking and waiting. The two are beginning to talk now.

Shell is exploiting oil, there are 16 oil wells and one flow station. They have been drilling oil for more than 40 years without the community getting what they are supposed to get. Last April, Shell came and called all the women and youths to the town hall and asked us to speak our minds. Nothing came of this. We presented a development programme for the micro credit scheme but they ignored us. We asked for 12 kilometers of water facility. They gave us 2.

Shell operates a divide and rule policy. We told Shell to go. Hundreds of women came and put out the gas flare because they refuse to help. Shell like to be forced into doing things!



## 5. Testimonies from Etche

### Umuechem: October / November 1990

#### Background

Umuechem is a village in Etche, a farming community in Rivers State north of Port Harcourt. Shell started operations in the area in 1957 and owns 32 oil wells, several flow stations and hundreds of miles of pipelines running through farmland in the area. The events of October and November 1990 are significant to the peoples of the Niger Delta for three reasons. Firstly, Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) was clearly implicated in the massacre that took place at Umuechem. Secondly, it was the first crisis to be brought to the attention of the international community. Thirdly, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) was formed only a few months after the events at Umuechem.

In late October 1990 the people of Umuechem held peaceful demonstrations to protest against the environmental degradation of their land as well as compensation for the loss of crops and pollution of water supplies. The community also demanded a fair share of the oil proceeds to develop their community, build roads and the provision of electricity and water supplies. Prior to holding the demonstrations, the community had written to Shell highlighting their complaints, but these were ignored.

Some 1000 people, men, women and children attended the mass demonstrations on October 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>. However, prior to the demonstration and unknown to them, SPDC had made a written request to the Rivers State Commissioner of Police, to send the Mobile Police to "protect SPDCs" facilities in the area. On the 30<sup>th</sup>, demonstrators peacefully occupied SPDC's premises as part of their protest. A further request for the deployment of Mobile Police was made by SPDC, this time to the River's State Governor and the Commissioner of Police.<sup>xvii</sup>

On the 31<sup>st</sup> October, the Mobile Police (MOPO) at the specific request of Shell, descended on Umuechem and attacked the peaceful demonstrators with guns, whips, and teargas. The result was that some 80 people, including the traditional ruler and local pastor were killed and some 500 homes were destroyed.<sup>xviii</sup> In addition to the lives lost and injured, property was looted and burnt and livestock were killed.

Although a judicial inquiry established that the demonstrations had been peaceful and that the Mobile Police had "displayed a reckless disregard for lives and property",<sup>xix</sup> 10 years later, Umuechem remains one of the most marginalised, environmentally destroyed and economically deprived communities of the Niger Delta.

#### Testimonies, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2000

**(The interviews were conducted in a family compound with three women and two young men who acted as interpreters but also contributed to the discussion)**

*During the time they did not know that this (the demonstration) would bring Mobile Police who came and started shooting at everyone. They ran and people were killed. One of her relatives was killed; her nephew was killed. The Mobile Police also killed the Chief of the village, in fact they purposefully came to his house to kill him. The MOPO stayed for about a week in the town. Many animals were killed and their properties were stolen or burnt. They lost all of their possessions, her box of wrapper and other properties. Everyone lost things.*

*They could not go to their homes as these were destroyed by the Mobile Police so they hid in the church and hid under chairs and later slept on the floor. There was no food and they were hungry, they were not comfortable. They felt that whatever happened they would remain like that.*

*Their heart is no longer constantly with them now, they have heart break. Some of those injured were arrested by the police and then taken to the hospital in a nearby town.*

*The Mobile Police still come to the town and when they see the MOPO they become afraid.*

*Often there are oil spills. Their cassava vegetables are destroyed from the pollution and gas flares. Shell does not want to pay them for the affect of the flare which damages some of the crops. So many times, oil spillages happen on their farms. All that happens is the contractors come and move it to somewhere else. Shell does not compensate them for the spillage which affects some of the crops too. They find that the heat of the oil environment is not good for them and they feel the heat.*

*There have been so many injuries because of the pipelines which are not buried. They are obstacles and people fall over them and wound themselves, whilst carrying their farm produce. Some of the wounds are very bad as the pipes are very rusty. One of the women had fallen over a rusty pipe on her way back from the farm. There were three of them and it was her friends who took her back to the town. Her wound was a huge gash which was now septic. There was nothing for her to do. Shell should come and bury the pipes underground. The pipes are not buried because Shell doesn't want to spend the money to bury the pipes. There is also barbed wire which is old and causes many injuries.*

*Since 1990 Shell has done nothing. The elders and the chiefs have been complaining to Shell but Shell doesn't want to do anything. The only project they did in the community is the bridge, which benefits Shell anyway. The women are suffering, there is no compensation from Shell, especially for the widows who lost their husbands during the crisis but Shell is still operating. They feel bad knowing how much Shell is making from their land.*

*They (the women) would like to have schools, money to train their children, hospitals which they don't have in Umuechem and compensation. Nothing has being going well with their families.*

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## 6. Testimonies from Egiland

### Background

Egiland is in Rivers State, about one and half hours from Port Harcourt. There are some 16 towns and villages with a population of about 100,000 people in this community which also has a distinct language and culture.

Oil was struck in 1962 in Obaji and Elf is the operating oil company in Egiland. A considerable part of the land, like others in the Niger Delta, has been devastated by oil exploration or taken over by oil company infrastructure development. There are hundreds of oil wells, and oil and gas pipelines crisscross the land. The flow stations operated by Elf are particularly large and include gas flares and large lakes of polluted water from the processing of waste products. Elf has dug huge pits, known locally as "Boro Pits," in the course of oil production which are then filled with water and become contaminated. These pits also constitute a danger to the public, especially children. In other areas the company has sand-filled the swamps used by local people for their fishing and to irrigate their farmland.

A standard practice of Elf is its use of "divide and rule" tactics which has made it difficult for the people to come together and speak with one voice. In addition Egi people have not been given adequate compensation nor are they employed by Elf at any level. The result is there is a massive influx of 'foreigners' both from other parts of Nigeria as well as a large expatriate presence in Egiland.

### Testimonies , 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2000

#### Mrs Odua, Leader, Egi Women's Council

##### ***Sokari Ekine: How have the oil companies and military occupation affected Egi women?***

Egi women are farmers, fisher women and hunters. With all the flaming and all the rest and pumping oil into our swamp areas it has deny us every living thing or even the soil culture has loosed. Every living thing in the swamp has got died. Today we have no hope we cannot even feed fine while they are making billions of Naira with our different gifts from God. We are not getting anything. Our farmland cannot produce any longer; even when we cry out to the government they overlook us. They don't care or hear our cry. When we cry to the oil companies they will only throw us tear gas and beat us well and drive us out of the premises.

##### ***SE: Since 1993 the security forces have come to Egi about four times. Could you tell me what happened and how the events of that time affected you?***

Actually it is the boys that led the struggle. When the boys saw what is - what we are lacking and what they have gained in our soil, they go and make a peaceful demonstration while the Company had hired the government. The oil company and the federal government work hand in hand. We have to be with our boys knowing full well that what they are saying is true and that the suffering is too much and the neglect; so the boys demonstrated and they beat us. In one town the place was deserted and the MOPO were going every 30 minutes they go there to check and any human being they see they hold and put them in detention. Some of our men lose work; some people lose their house; they even burnt down some houses even some women have no where to perch and some children can no longer continue with their education because of when we see what they are doing to us.

They keep on searching for human beings as if they are looking for animals. Just as hunters look for animal that is the way they do to Egi people. Each time Egi people come out to say the real truth or talk of the neglect or what they are suffering they will just beat, destroy, drive every

person out of his village. I think federal government has hand because they want to kill us before they can make their successful drilling.

***SE: What about the events of February 12 1994?***

The conflict - before anything we have Judas there are so many Judases in this Egiland. One those people that have been favoured so each time they know there is problem or truth that they want to bring out they will leak them. Before the people will go (to demonstrate) already the forces is there. They (we) can't penetrate. They kill and wound so many people. They will destroy things, sometimes they even shoot tear gas and so many people will be wounded. So that is the struggle and the even there is a chief that they destroyed his house and some other young boys that are telling the truth.

Just like our comrade they don't like him because he is telling the whole world the truth so they hate him.

***SE: I understand you wrote a protest letter to Obasanjo shortly after he became President in September 1997?***

That time the women saw the neglect so we decided to go on demonstration, peaceful demonstration. We figured out the things that were being neglected and how they are treating women. So many.... all the villagers - 15,000 or more, we said what we are suffering. Our Egi Women's Council wrote Obasanjo that he is the figure head that we want reply from him that this is what we are suffering. We don't have reply because women have been neglected right from the day they start the operations. So the movement and the request everything has been buried in their waste bucket nothing. Now in those good days our husbands they fish and farm when they come back we eat very well. The fish we have are big ones (but) today nothing is in the ponds. Our husbands cannot go and come back with any fish. All the washing of the pipes they wash have killed all the aquatic life in our land. Today the only thing our people see is stock fish bowl and ice fish of which if you don't even have money you cannot buy - ice fish is now N2500 a carton, can you believe that?

***SE: What has destroyed the fish in your ponds?***

Each time when Elf people wash their pipe - you know their pipe is filled with oil, when they wash they turn the water down to the swamp, this crude then kill all the aquatic life leaving us with nothing to eat and survive with.

***SE: Last Christmas you made a list of demands. Is this the Egi Women's Charter?***

Some of our demands were women should have direct contact with the oil company, that they should employ women and they should fill some of the Boro pit, because some of our children do enter there and get hurt. That they should confirm those who have jobs. That we need hospital. But before our women reach hospital they will die - so many women have died from child bearing because we don't have doctors here. So many other requests.

***SE: When the military came in how did the women feel? Who are they blaming for their hardship, the government or the oil companies?***

The first time we blamed the oil companies. When some of my women I went to find out they told us that the cause is not from them that the percentage that they are paying to the federal government - that we should cry to federal government. It is the oil company and the federal government that is causing our neglect not only one cause.

The time the women came out to tell them (the elders and chiefs) we want to have such power They said: Do you want to have this power that men have? This is what the men say and they will not allow us to have any power in Egi land. The Egi Women's Council asked the Council to give

us our own chair - so the chairman called the women and asked them what is our right to ask such in my own area of gathering, that if we have it he will sue us to court. And that they will throw itching powder on any person that insists on her right; so we have to calm down. Women have no chance. We don't want to remain in this position because we suffer more in this land. We bear and bring up the children, we feed them, I tell you it is very difficult for us women.

We support the Egi Youth Organisation; we work with them - each time we have a difficulty we tell them the topic and we discuss. We discuss like with you etc - what is our aim, how do we see the condition of our living, what is our plan.

In our country Nigeria when they see you are telling the truth they will suppress you - even if you take them to court the case will stay more than 10 years. That is why some people don't talk again. The court is working hand in hand with the government and the oil companies to suppress we ordinary people.

## **2) Elderly Woman**

Elf came here in 1964. Since then the farming has got worse. Farms are not good, yam cassava even palm fruit doesn't yield anymore. There is no oil in the palm fruit again. Many of our children cannot go to school due to poverty. There is no fish in the pond because chemicals from Elf fill up our swamp. Children have cough, catarrh, sight problems, skin rashes.

During the women's uprising many of the properties were destroyed. One women's punishment was her son and her husband was beaten and has lost his job with Elf. He was detained by the police. His crime was being an activist. The man was named by youths supported by Elf as someone whose family was involved in the demonstration. So Elf uses local youth to intimidate and cause problems for local people. We have no electricity but Elf have it 24 hours a day.

## **3) Rose Nwaomah, Member, Egi Women's Council**

So many girls go into prostitution – they are local girls, and they do it because of money. As soon as you say you are working for Elf they (women) will follow you well well. But if you say you are working for government they know that there is not enough money. You see so many girls hunting for men because on their way back after sleeping with them they will give them 5000 Naira whereas civil servants will not give them more than 100 Naira.

It means that there are a lot of women who would have married from the village but who are now prostituting around, so many. It causes breaking up of homes. Some of our women see how those people that visit oil workers are dressed in fine clothes. Some women are leaving their husbands because of poor living and change their lives rather than staying under their husbands where you cant even afford a pair of slippers. They prefer staying where they can make their money. There are young girls in this village that have babies - some with white men. It is very terrible.

## **Group Discussion**

Oil is flowing from Niger Delta but we are not gaining anything. The oil they are drilling has made our farm land not to yield anything. In those good days our yam product in the farm was yielding fine, cassava and cocoa yam was doing fine but today there is no good product again.

The most annoying thing in this village is that in those good days after farming we used better fish to cook our soup but today no fish in the bush in our swamp area - the only thing we eat now is stock fish which I showed you people at the market. After the good ones have been taken away they now bring that one used by dog for us to eat.

Our children are not schooling well. They go only to primary level and after that there is no money to pay for their education. Our children don't know what to do after that, they don't know where to attach themselves, no employment, nothing. The only thing left is for some of them to go and

thief. Just like what we are saying about the girls who prostitute around because they don't know where to attach themselves. If you people can help so that we can get something doing - to help us occupy ourselves with something, some kind of handiwork that will give us some money, we will be happy.

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## **7. Testimonies from Ogoni**

There are approximately half a million Ogoni in Nigeria. They occupy approximately 400 square kilometres of the eastern delta to the north of Rivers State. The Ogoni nation is organised into six kingdoms: Babbe, Eleme, Gokana, Nyo-Khana, Ken-Khana and Tai.

### **Background**

The Ogoni Bill of Rights (OBR) and the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) were launched on 26 August 1990. MOSOP was to be the mechanism to carry out the objectives of the OBR which broadly fall into four areas: demand for the right to control their own political affairs; demand for the control and use of Ogoni economic resources for Ogoni development; protection and preservation of Ogoni languages and the protection of Ogoni environment from further degradation. The Ogoni Bill of Rights openly challenged both the Nigerian military government and the multinational oil companies' legitimacy to determine the economic and political affairs of the Ogoni people and thereby the entire Niger Delta.

The testimonies of the Ogoni women relate to the period 1993 – 1996, a particularly tragic period in the history of the Ogoni people. It is during this time that the Nigerian Military government began a three-year period of untold violence, murder, rape, burning, looting and beatings. In all, over 3,000 people were murdered, 30 villages ransacked and thousands of women and girls raped.

On 1 January 1993, the Ogoni people held a peaceful protest against Shell's activities, including environmental destruction, in their area. The demonstration called for the "the restoration of our environment; we are asking for the basic necessities of life – water, electricity, roads, education; we are asking, above all, for the right to self-determination so that we can be responsible for our resources and our environment." On the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1993, the military government of Babangida passed the Treason and Treasonable Offences Decree which made the call for minority autonomy a treasonable offence punishable by death. On the 9<sup>th</sup> July 1993, 136 Ogoni were massacred on their way back from Cameroon, by the neighbouring Andoni people. A further 100 people were killed on the 5<sup>th</sup> August. Other clashes between the Ogoni and the Andoni and the Okrika people continued over the next few months. As stated elsewhere in this report, the Nigerian state has used the insidious weapon of divide and rule, setting one ethnic nationality against another through favours, altering of local government boundaries, compensation, bribing of elders and traditional rulers, and deliberate incitement.

On the 17 November 1993, General Sani Abacha came to power in a coup and immediately created the Provisional Ruling Council (PRC) which ruled by military decree. Within two months of his rule, General Abacha took two steps that would prove significant to his murderous campaign against the Ogoni people. The first was the appointment of a new military governor of Rivers State, Lt. Colonel Dauda Komo. The second was the creation of the Rivers State Internal Security Task Force under Lt. Colonel Paul Okuntimo. Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) together with Komo and Okuntimo and Capt Obi Umahi, spent the next three years terrorising the Ogoni people. Ken Saro Wiwa and 8 other Ogoni activists were murdered on 10 November 1995.

The testimonies below were given by the members of FOWA (Federation of Ogoni Women Associations). FOWA was created in 1993 as part of MOSOP and played an important role in the Ogoni struggle.

## **Ken Khana Kingdom**

**Testimonies, through an Interpreter, Bane Town, 25 March 2000**

### **Married Woman**

What happened to Ogoni women, it is only God who can bear with us. In the old days the army and Shell would be here. Shell and Nigerian government bring the army to destroy us. They forced our pregnant women to run and forced them to deliver untimely babies. They arrested Ken Saro-Wiwa and put him in detention and hanged him innocently - and our women are still suffering it till tomorrow. You all know that women are people that seek truth. Had it been Ken Saro-Wiwa did any wrong, Ogoni women wouldn't have followed him, but because he was on the road of truth and because he stood for truth and justice, that is why the women of Ogoni came out in mass to follow him.

Right from 1958 when the multinational oil companies came to Ogoni land, they made their operation and at a stage we cannot plant our crops on the farm; there was nothing like good harvest. Like many places in Ken Khana we didn't have corn during that time - our cassava didn't yield fine, our yam didn't yield fine; we didn't have schools; we didn't have hospitals. If you are a woman and you have pregnancy there is no hospital to go. Even if you have child labour in the midnight, many of our women died because there is no hospital for them to go. Even when little children get sick in the night, no motor to take them because of high cost of transportation so women suffered a lot in this trouble.

What the oil company and the Nigerian government did to us in that time we suffered a lot and our women are still handicapped till today. Most of us cannot train our children till today because during the army occupation many of our goods and properties were looted and women were being abused in a way which is very very bad. Our men were killed. Many many are widows, their husbands killed by the army. And the worst part of it was when they killed them they just took their dead body away you couldn't see their dead bodies till today; many of the men were killed at that time and our young boys too. And for doing that to the Ogoni people, because right from the time they came in 1958 till 1992 Ogoni people didn't know what Shell was doing to us; it was bad. No compensation, nothing. In 1992 when Ken came up and said "My people, you people are suffering. These people drilling your oil, they are marginalizing you people. They take your oil. They need to compensate you but they are not doing it. Let's rise up to fight for our rights. Let's have dominion over what we have, our resources". Right from that night we started to know we are in darkness. He brought that light for us. And for killing that man Shell should never never come back to Ogoni land. Till they bring us Ken Saro Wiwa alive with eight others. You people should know that women of Ogoni are suffering and we need help. We do not want Shell at all. Nigerian government with Shell are doing all this to Ogoni people and we say no to Shell. They should never never step on Ogoni soil forever.

### **Kawayorko, Housewife**

On this day we women were demonstrating. We sang as we moved from our town to Ken Khana. Singing near the main road we met face to face with the army - they asked us: "What are you people doing?" After our own explanation that we were celebrating the Ogoni Day we were beaten up at once. They asked us to lie down on the road - it was not merely caning. After using their *koboko* (whip) on us they started kicking us with their foot. They dragged some of the women into the bush. We were naked; our dresses were torn - our wrapper were being loosed by a man - a man who is not your husband. They tore our pants and began raping us in the bush. The raping wasn't secret because about two people are raping you there. They are raping you there in front of your own sister. They are raping your sister too in front of your mother. It was just like a market.

After raping us they forced us to pluck one grass in the bush - because that grass whenever we get wound on the farm they bring it and put it on the wound - so after doing that abuse on the



women they forced us to bring out that grass and chew - maybe they feel it is medicine that will heal our bodies - I don't know.

They then carried us and throw us into their motor. Their officer on duty - their Captain Obi Umahi was sitting waiting. He asked us: 'What were you people doing, what actually were you doing that made my boys to do all this to you? Our answer was, we were celebrating Ogoni Day. The man said "Aaaaah, Ogoni Day? Who is your leader now? Ken Saro-Wiwa, we said. And he replied, "You people say Ken Saro-Wiwa is your leader, but where is he now? Don't you know that he is late and you are still saying he is your leader". He asked us who killed him? I replied it was the Nigerian government that killed him - the captain slapped me in the face. The slap made me to fall down as it was unexpected and he used all his anger to slap me and I fell down. He then told his boys to pack me in a room somewhere to wait for him. He then asked them to bring me and the others and made us face the sun naked and standing. After some time, about 3 O'clock, he ordered us to go home, naked, just like that. Our brothers and sisters living in Bori, seeing us like that naked along the street, the women asked us to enter the bush that they will go and bring clothes for us. So they went to the town to bring some clothes for us.

After given us clothing our sisters and brothers called taxi and took us to Dr Owens Wiwa's clinic to receive treatment and after a week we went to our different homes.

Thank you for coming to ask this today.

### **Nyo-Khana Kingdom**

#### **Comfort Aluzim, Farmer**

That very fateful day Ken Saro-Wiwa was coming to a rally and the women and men of MOSOP were singing to receive him into the town. They were by the main road. Meeting up with them the army asked us to stop. They asked us what we are doing. They asked us to turn back but we said we will not turn back, that we are waiting for Ken and we want to see him. There was an army man among them that just kneeled down on the main road and pick up some sand put it in his mouth and swear that if we did not turn back right now that he is going to shoot us all. Right from that moment they started beating us. We were running we did not know where to run to. Within a short time we saw Ken's car coming. It was right in our town that they arrested him. The only question he asked them was "Is this how the Nigerian government arranged to meet me today?" Just like this other woman was saying it was just the same thing. They started beating the women after arresting Ken because some of the men went with him. Beating the women, dragging them into the bush. And they started loosing their cloth and raping them. My husband married two of us and my mate was with pregnancy. One army man just used his leg and hit her in the stomach and she miscarry. That was the beginning of struggle and suffering in Nyo Khana. And since there was no hospital there was no where to carry this lady to, if not that there was an old lady in our place that normally attends to pregnant women traditionally at our home maybe my mate would have died. Three of us would have died because of the rape, many women were injured and it was that old lady that treated us. Right from that time we still remain in trouble we still remain in suffering, because help is not coming from anywhere and the actualisation of our struggle has not been achieved. The very person, the very man we were expecting our help to come from is Ken Saro Wiwa and he has been killed.

#### **Mercy Nkwagha**

We were five women going to market on that very day, the day of this incident. It was right from January 1993 when we started this struggle and that is when the problem started, when the army started oppressing us. There was no motor that time so all we do is trekking to market. As we are going along with our foodstuff to sell, reaching Nwiyaakara junction the army met us there and asked us to stop. What they told us was that when we were passing we didn't greet them. They wanted to know why we were passing without greeting them. There was a lady amongst us

that said "Ah! Is it because of greeting that the army will stop us this morning?" As she was going another army man just draw her back. They started beating us, carrying the foodstuffs all that we were carrying to market to sell, they took all. They took our things, took our bags at the same time they asked us to raise our hands. The women put their loads on the head as they were raising their hands. Then they asked us to jump, to frog jump. There was an old woman with us that could not jump. What the army man did was to use his double barrel gun to beat on the old woman's back and she fell down. We were tired and had no strength again to go to the market so we returned home. When reaching home with our empty basins we heard again in the village that another set of army had reached our home town. They entered the town and the whole town was deserted. The army had shoot their gun and everyone had scattered. The whole town was as silent as a grave. When the army had scared the people away from the town, they then packed all the people's things, packed our animals, packed foodstuff and went away with it.

My own belief is that Shell together with the Federal Government of Nigeria that bring out those army should never never come back to Ogoniland again. In the whole crisis I have lost many of my people, my properties have been looted. I have lost a great deal of things. Since 1992, when Ken Saro Wiwa ordered them to stopped drilling on our land that now, even this year the yield on my farm is much better than before. We want people to stop Shell from coming back to Ogoni land again.

### **Babbe Kingdom**

#### **Mariam Ikirikor**

It was in 1994 that Ken came to Babbe. After the rally he said we should put in our mind and record it somewhere within us that after leaving Babbe today that the Nigerian government and Shell will arrest him and it will be the final arrest. After a short time we heard that he had been arrested. Since that time they arrested him until to date, from the time they executed him till to date, we are still in suffering.

Before we get up in the morning the first thing we heard before the cock crows is gunshot. The army people had come through Andoni, because they are very close, only the river separates us. They came in the night and before they themselves knew, the enemies are around and they have surround the whole place. They started shooting guns but there was no where for people to run and hide. Many of the men were being killed, little children, pregnant women were being killed. In short many lives were lost and their animals were looted, houses were looted out. This was in Konoboue town.

After the execution of Ken Saro Wiwa, our names, we the FOWA women, were sent down to the Captain (Obi Umahi) at that time. And they (the army) were looking for us the way children look for rats in the bush, day and night. So we did hide in the forest and made our meetings in the bush. When the enemies, because amongst us there were little little enemies who were giving reports of what is happening in the community. So the enemies went to tell the captain that FOWA were still meeting in the forest. So there was a day when we were in a meeting. Unexpectedly the army came and some people ran away. Many were shot. There was a lady, her name is Blessing, her hand was shot and up till today her hand is useless to her.

Ledum Mitee is making a way that Shell should come back to Ogoni. But Babbe kingdom FOWA says no to Shell and if you are away and you hear that the Ogoni women are dying again know very well it is because we don't want Shell any longer in Ogoni, that whenever Ledum Mitee brings back Shell or calls any of the companies back to Ogoniland you can be sure that the women are ready to die. Shell should never never come back to our lives again.

### **Alice Douglas**

It is divide and rule. Men are presently being encouraged to support Shell but we women will never agree. In 1994 there was a day when many lives were being lost, many properties being

burnt down. Little children were being killed. A certain young man in Babbe Kingdom still has a bullet in his eyes and is still having pain. Many many bad things like that happened and the women suffered a lot. Because the men, many of the men escaped, many young boys were killed. The young ladies were being raped. Even pregnant women were forced. When they (the army) meet you they will order you to "deliver now, now, I say deliver that child now, let me see". Obi Umahi ordered his boys to kill all the young boys right from seven years up. We women suffered a lot.

The problem women in Ogoni are facing now, in all the Kingdoms, is this coming of Shell again. Because being widows, our children being orphans, Shell should be prepared to dig a mass grave for the whole of Ogoni people not excluding women - the whole of Ogoni people. If they cannot do that they should prepare a very big yard with a fence that they can pack the Ogoni people inside before they can come to Ogoni land. For them to come back they should also bring back Ken Saro Wiwa and the eight others alive to us because it is only Ken that can have a dialogue with them. Because the women, we don't know how to make dialogues with the multinationals and federal government. It was only Ken that was pleading for that dialogue and since they killed him women don't have anytime for dialogue. And what we want is no to Shell and Shell should be forever out of Ogoni and our lives. The problem that we are having now is, because we hear it there is another war again in Ogoniland. Shell is now using our men, our brothers, to fight us again and we cannot see it and will never see it. We cannot tolerate it.

### **Docas Nwiaz**

I remember the day the army people passed through Andoni land. They came in the night and immediately I heard the sound of gun I run to safety leaving my little children in the house because there was no time to wake them. When it was early morning I came from my hiding place to bring out my little children. In the compound I saw my two goats that had been killed. They had removed all the intestines and took the body. On my way entering the house to wake the children it was then I heard the sound of gun and her leg was hit. What I realised was that something hit my leg with force. (*Shows the leg*) After, I managed to pass through the backyard and was just managing like that into the bush. After about one week I went to one man, a medical man in the village but he could not remove the bullet and it remains in my leg until today.

Whenever rain wants to fall it affects my leg - the strain then affects all my body so I suffer from that until today. That very fateful day, as I was managing with the children as I have nine children, on the way dragging them out, two died because of bullet and I managed to escape with the rest.

### **Tai Kingdom**

#### **Farmer (Name Withheld)**

During the period, the women of Tai kingdom suffered a lot. The army came to Tai kingdom because we have some oil fields. Many of the women were being beaten; many of the houses were being destroyed. At that time the women decided that come dead or alive they will still hold their meeting. The FOWA women had their meeting in the bush. We arranged with the youth wing of the movement; the youth of Tai kingdom dug a very big pit in the ground and we the women entered the pit and the youth used bushes to cover us while we have our meeting so that if the army are passing they will not know human beings are there.

In our own place at Tai, the pipeline passes just near to our house and my husband was the principal landlord there. So at a stage the man said, Shell should not come again when they do not pay compensation to our people. Why are they coming and taking the oil that is on our land for free? So there was a day when the army came. My brother was blocking the way, you know as a man. What the army did was that they just use a little pipe like that but very thick and they hit him on the waist. They took him to the hospital for groin analysis but he is not all that normal till to date.

FOWA women don't base only on one chapter to hold their meetings because Shell and the Nigerian government have their informers among us so what they normally do is go to each of the chapters, to circulate, in Tai kingdom in the bush to hold their meetings so that is how we managed in that period.

### **Comfort Ndii**

My property was being run down in August 1994. I was going to the market to buy things to sell, iced fish, tomatoes and pepper. So coming home with those things I packed them in the house and prepared food for the workers I sent to the farm. Before I returned from the farm entering the town the whole town was as calm as a graveyard because the army has entered the town. Entering the house, they (the army) broke the door and packed the two cartons of ice fish and packed all condiments there. They carried it to a high place and cook my fish there. They did this because they know I am in the FOWA organisation. They were not happy that they did not meet us at home, so they use their dagger to destroy the zinc of the house my mother built and up till today when rain falls it normally disturbs us.

We settled ourselves in another man's home, in our neighbours household. When they (the army) came we ran with those people out to the bush and it took us time before we come back to our place. We started life again with just a little pot and we stay inside. It was very hard for us, I tell you.

I am happy that you came today to hear the truth about the Ogoni women. Ogoni women and MOSOP have told the world that Shell should not come back to Ogoni. What Shell is using now is causing community and community to fight, brothers with brothers. Their hope is that the whole of Ogoni will die, the whole race, because when we kill ourselves there will be nobody to talk to them (Shell) again. You should tell the world that Shell has come back again, creating war, creating problem in Ogoni land again.

### **Bori Town**

#### **Uenaata Kormue**

When we heard they had arrested Ken, we were in a meeting. When we heard the bad news, all of us started crying. It was a sorrowful day for us. After that day there was another meeting we were holding at Bori town. The army came to meet us in the meeting. The moment they came to the meeting they started shooting. Some women were able to run and escape. Many women were captured and taken to their camp. Obi Umahi told us that he has told his own boys to go and capture the women and that we should call our leaders to come and talk with him. Particularly the FOWA women, because their names were being written and handed over to Obi Umahi. So many of the houses were being visited and when the army got there they destroyed doors and entered the houses, packed their goods out. If they saw children they maltreated them by beating them. The day they came to our meeting, the women they captured were taken to Port Harcourt. They were being ordered to lie on a table and they used *koboko* on them. Many of them were being beaten by the army men. All of them stayed there for two weeks. What happened was that if your people came to give you food, you will pay to eat that food and they the army people will eat with you. There was one woman that didn't have any one to send her food and the army would not allow anyone else to give her food, so out of hunger the woman died there.

We are asking Shell not to come back to Ogoni. They will be maltreating us, torturing us until we use our minds to say Shell come back. There is no time we will say Shell come back, instead we are ready to die. Some of the women, before they returned from that two weeks (in detention) their little children had died because of hunger. The day we were being released - when they release you they will be pushing you and beating you - I fell down and have a wound here on my leg.

FOWA says that before Shell come back, they should dig a mass grave where they will put all the FOWA women in. That is, they will bury the whole FOWA women.

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